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M. L. GOW. R. TAYLOR.

"How the old days come back to me," she murmured.

"Laden with Golden Grain."

THE

ARGOSY.

EDITED BY

CHARLES W. WOOD.

VOLUME LIII.

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"How the old days come back to me," she murmured.
From that moment her punishment began.
Then she advanced with the skirts of her night robe held daintily between thumb and finger, and danced one figure after another with her imaginary partner.
So Margaret set to work on the ruined water-mill, while Mr. Plock lounged at her feet, asking no greater happiness than to be near her.
"Is one permitted to smoke here?" he asked.
"You will let me call you Charlotte?"

Illustrations to "In the Lotus Land."

THE ARGOSY.

JANUARY, 1892.

ASHLEY.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER I.

LAURETTA CARNAGIE.

THE red light of the sun, nearing its setting, shone brilliantly on the fair domains of Ashley. The house, a fine mansion, stood on an eminence in its own park and commanded an extensive view of the near and distant scenery. Several of the windows opened to the lawn, and there leisurely stepped out of one of them a gentleman of middle age, followed by a young lady in the bloom of youth. He, Sir Henry Ashley, held a telescope in his hand, and, setting it to the right focus, turned it in the direction of the high road, which they could see winding along beneath them into the distance.

"Anna!" called out a peremptory voice from inside the room, "you have not put on your sun-bonnet."

"I have my parasol, mamma."

"Come in and put on your sun-bonnet instantly. Your face will be a fright to be seen. The sun this month browns worse than at midsummer."

Lady Pope's mandates were not to be disobeyed, and Anna Rivers retreated to the house.

"Look here, Anna," said Sir Henry Ashley, when she reappeared, "yours is a farther sight than mine. Is that the carriage, near Prout's farm? There's something moving."

Miss Rivers looked towards the spot indicated by the baronet: first by aid of the glass, then steadily with her naked eye. "I think it is a post-chaise, Sir Henry," was her answer.

"Then there has been some bungle at the station, and she has missed my carriage."

"There always is a bungle when things are left to servants," interposed Lady Pope's voice again. "You should have gone yourself, as I advised, Sir Harry."

"So I would, had I been sure of her coming. But I went

yesterday, and I went the day before, and nothing came of it. I can't pass my days dancing between here and Stopton. She's staying, no doubt, at that old Indian's at Liverpool. They who were to receive her and start her off here."

"I wish she was not coming at all," cried Lady Pope. "The idea of a gay man—as you may be called—being left resident guardian to a girl of twenty! Steps must be taken to provide her with another home—and a never-ending trouble I foresee we shall have about it. You might have taken my advice and declined to receive her here at all. Under the circumstances you would have been justified, without any breach of politeness."

"It would have been more a breach of kindness," said Sir Harry drily. "As you happen to be with me, this house is as suitable for her, at present, as any other. But I cannot make out how it was the General never received the news of my wife's death."

"Very likely you forgot to write," observed Lady Pope. "Carelessness was always the besetting sin of Henry Ashley."

A conscious smile curled Sir Henry's lip. Carelessness his besetting sin! then what might be said of many others that beset him? He made his sister no reply. She was given by nature to fits of grumbling, and Sir Harry had long ago found that the best plan was to let her grumble the fit out. He took up a newspaper, stretched himself on one of the benches, and read away at ease. Lady Pope raised her voice now and then, but Sir Harry took refuge in the journal, as an excuse for silence. Presently Anna Rivers, who had walked to the brow of the slope, came back again.

"The chaise is coming on quickly, Sir Harry. It *is* a chaise. It has taken the Ashley turning."

"Then she *has* missed the carriage!" protested Lady Pope. "Those two men will be sticking themselves with it, at Stopton, till the last train's in to-night: and that will be eleven o'clock. Getting tipsy, of course. Bad management, Sir Harry."

An interval of expectation, and the chaise spoken of rattled on the gravel drive of the lawn. A tall, distinguished-looking young man sprang from it before it had well stopped. Lady Pope wheeled her chair to the glass door, and put her head out, hoping to bring the arrival within view; her ears also at work, as they generally were.

"That's not Miss Carnagie! Why, I do believe it is —— Anna," she sharply called out, breaking off her sentence, "Anna, come here. That's never Arthur Ashley?"

"Yes, mamma."

"What brings him here now? He ——"

"How are you, dear Lady Pope?" cried the stranger, coming up with Sir Harry, and holding out his hand.

"None the better for seeing you, Mr. Ashley," was the civil rejoinder. "Pray how is it that you come wasting your time here now, shirking your studies?"

"I went up for honours, dear aunt, and gained them. So I can afford myself a holiday." At which satisfactory information, Lady Pope vouchsafed nothing but an unsatisfactory grunt.

The two gentlemen were speedily immersed in college politics, reminiscences to Sir Henry, realities to Arthur Ashley. Sir Henry had never gained university honours, had never tried for them, but he was delighted that Arthur, his presumptive heir, should do so. Sir Henry had been always childless, and this young man, his brother's eldest son, was the present heir to Ashley. Sir Henry had taken to him years ago, and brought him up as such.

A short period, and another arrival aroused them. They went out to meet it, Sir Harry hurriedly, Arthur Ashley and Miss Rivers lingeringly, for he seized the opportunity of speaking to her in a whisper. Sir Henry's carriage was drawn up before the entrance. A lady, dark as a gipsy, with flashing eyes and features of great beauty, sat in it, whilst a copper-coloured woman was awkwardly descending from the seat behind. Sir Harry soon had Miss Carnagie on his arm, and led her in.

She seemed to take in everything with those keen, flashing eyes; the extensive grounds, the indoor arrangements of the house; and now she was addressing Lady Pope. It struck some of them that she was more self-possessed in manner than is common to a girl of twenty.

"I hope I have the pleasure of meeting Lady Ashley in good health."

"This is my sister, Lady Pope," interrupted Sir Harry. "I wrote to Genenal Carnagie of the loss I had experienced in my wife: the letter must have miscarried. Lady Pope and Miss Rivers will welcome you, dear Miss Carnagie, as warmly as Lady Ashley would have done."

"I am an invalid," broke in Lady Pope: "a chronic affection of the hip joint: and cannot walk without difficulty. So I am chiefly confined, in the day, to this chair. Anna Rivers will be my substitute in showing you to your rooms."

At the foot of the stairs, when Anna Rivers was conducting Miss Carnagie towards them, they came upon young Ashley. "As no one has thought me worthy of an introduction to Miss Carnagie, I suppose I must introduce myself," he said. "Miss Carnagie, I am Arthur Ashley."

His voice was so pleasant, his manner so easy, himself altogether so much of a gentleman, that it would have been sufficient passport to her favour, even without his good looks, and Miss Carnagie thought so. But she hurried on. If ever there was a vain girl on earth, it was Lauretta Carnagie, and she had no mind to linger with strangers until the dust and the travelling attire were taken off her. She had a favourite theory—that first impressions were everything. Some trunks were in her room, and the copper maid was seated on them; her

head wrapped round with folds of pink merino, and her shoulders with a covering of white linen.

"You good-for-nothing, vicious creature!" broke out Miss Carnagie. "How dare you sit idling there, instead of putting out my things to dress?"

"How can Nana get out missie's things if missie got the keys?" responded the woman, her broad mouth breaking into a respectful, pleasant smile.

"She is the most idle thing alive," said Miss Carnagie to Anna, as she threw a ring of keys to the attendant. "Indian servants always are. If I were not to rate her continually, I should get nothing done. Papa was often obliged to have her flogged."

"Flogged!" uttered Anna, who had stood by, quite distressed at witnessing such discourtesy to a servant.

"And as you don't allow flogging in England, and she knows it, she has made up her mind to be as vicious and troublesome as possible," proceeded Miss Carnagie. "My mother was the daughter of a West Indian planter, and Nana was a slave born on the estate, so she is our own property, just the same as our horses or dogs. They had her taught hair-dressing and millinery, that she might be a maid to me; and when mamma died, she specially bequeathed her to me."

"But Nana not idle, Nana not vicious; Nana love missie, and try, try, try alwars to please her with all her heart," interrupted the woman, whilst tears ran down her cheeks.

"Can I assist you in any way?" inquired Anna Rivers of Miss Carnagie. "If not, I will no longer intrude upon you."

"You don't intrude. I hate to be alone. Sit down while she does my hair. I want to know all about everything here. You are aware I am a stranger. Do you live here?"

"No. I am visiting here with mamma, Lady Pope."

"Was that really Sir Harry Ashley? I pictured him as old as my father: and he had white whiskers and a bald head. Your uncle is a young man. At least, we should call him so in India: men age so rapidly there."

"Sir Harry is more than forty: near fifty, I believe. But he is not my uncle."

"No! He introduced Lady Pope as his sister."

"But Lady Pope is not my mother. In point of fact, she is not related to me. My father, Captain Rivers, was a widower, and she—who was Miss Ashley then—married him. I was only two years old, and have never known any other mother. My father did not live long, and then she married an elderly man, Colonel Sir Ralph Pope."

"Is he here?"

"Oh! he is dead too: has been dead a long while."

"Who was that we met in the hall? 'Arthur Ashley,' he said. Some one also attached to the house?"

"Sir Harry's nephew. He lives here. He is the heir to Ashley. His father, Sir Harry's brother, was the heir, but he is recently dead."

"He will be Sir Arthur Ashley?"

"Of course. In time."

"Which dress missie wear?" inquired Nana, displaying two or three, all of them much alike: black silk with crape trimmings.

Miss Carnagie pointed to one. "It is so annoying to be in mourning!" she pettishly exclaimed. "One can never appear to advantage."

"I like black silk," remarked Anna. "It always looks well."

"For you, who are fair; but I look like a great black crow in it." And Anna Rivers laughed.

Not like a black crow, but like a handsome girl. Sir Harry thought so when she descended to the drawing-room, and so did Arthur Ashley. The latter was extremely fond of handsome girls, and ready to flirt with all he had the good fortune to meet.

It was no doubt very wrong of Lady Pope, but she was given to building castles in the air. She might have raised as many for herself as she pleased, but an inconvenience sometimes arose when she so favoured her friends. Several years older than her brother, she had exercised an influence over himself and his actions in early life, which she strove still to retain. She it was who had helped him to his wife, and now she had it in her head to help him to another—and that other Anna Rivers. Anna was so completely under her finger and thumb, that she felt sure if she could only see her my Lady Ashley, *she* should be the real ruler of her brother's house. A suspicion had certainly arisen in her mind that Anna cared rather too much for Arthur Ashley, but it gave her little concern. She held the young lady in perfect subjection, and she entered on a course of snubbing towards the gentleman, which she hoped would not fail to drive him away from Ashley. Cold, cautious and positive, Lady Pope rarely failed to carry out any scheme on which she had set her mind.

The time went on, and Lauretta Carnagie grew in favour with some of the inmates of Ashley. Not with all. Lady Pope took a dislike to her, and the same may be said of Anna Rivers. Miss Carnagie combated Lady Pope's wishes, she was indifferent to her complaints and ailments, she shocked her prejudices. It was next to open warfare between them; their tastes and pursuits were so completely antagonistic. Breakfast over, Lady Pope would call for her work-basket and begin her morning's employment. Sometimes it would be clothes for charity children, sometimes ornamental fancy-work. Miss Carnagie held both in equal contempt.

"If you would undertake some amusement of this nature, you would soon find pleasure in it," began Lady Pope to her one day.

"Suppose you were to work a pair of slippers, for instance, for your friend at Liverpool, Nabob Call."

"Pleasure in anything so horrid! Thank you. I never learnt needlework, and hope I never shall. It is only fit for old maids and ugly women."

"As I cannot be included with either of those classes, I will not reply to your words," was Lady Pope's retort, smothering her ire.

"I did not say others never did any. I said it was only fit for that sort of people," was the careless apology of Miss Carnagie.

"If you were to amuse yourself with a little music this morning?"

"I never play when there's no one to play for."

"We have plenty of books. Anna, reach——"

"Don't trouble yourself. I don't care for reading."

"What do you care for, I wonder?" thought Lady Pope. "I fear, Miss Carnagie, this wet morning is rendering you very dull."

"Dreadfully so. I wish I had lain in bed."

"Lying late in bed is pernicious to the health. Even I, with my lame leg, am out of bed every morning at seven. How did you contrive to amuse yourself in India?"

"Oh, I like an Indian life!" was the animated reply: "no one there reproaches you with being idle. I rode, and dressed, and flirted, and lay to be fanned, and——"

"*Flirted!*" interrupted Lady Pope. "Surely I did not hear aright?"

"What's the harm of flirting?"

"A young lady reared in European society would shrink from such an avowal."

"Why, it is what everybody does," returned Miss Carnagie. "Those who say they don't, when they do, are hypocrites, that's all. Old ones are more addicted to it than young. I saw you flirting the other evening, when that man dined here, Lord—— what's his name? the new member."

Lady Pope turned green: she had never been so insulted in her life. "Miss Carnagie!" she uttered, in an awful tone. "Your remark upon *my*self I pass over with the contempt it deserves," she added, after a pause, during which no apology came from Miss Carnagie, "but I cannot allow such pernicious sentiments to be avowed in the hearing of Miss Rivers."

"They will do her no harm. Not half so much as poking her chest over that humdrum chenille stitch. I should throw it in the fire, if anyone forced me to do it. So would she, if she dared."

Anna Rivers looked up, a hot flush upon her face. She did *not* like the work, but she liked still less to fall under Lady Pope's displeasure.

"I declare it is clearing up!" called out Miss Carnagie, springing to the window before Lady Pope could find fitting words to retort. "Anna, get your habit on."

"I cannot permit Miss Rivers to go out now," said Lady Pope.

Miss Carnagie turned her back to Lady Pope. "Anna, I say, will you go with me or not? You heard Mr. Ashley say he would ride with us if the rain cleared up."

Anna shook her head, and whispered, "I dare do nothing that mamma opposes."

"You ought to have been born a slave, like old Nana," scornfully exclaimed Miss Carnagie; "the blacks on grandpapa's estate are under no worse thraldom than you." And Lady Pope was tempted to wish that she had been born a slave-driver, if she might have applied the whip to the young lady's shoulders.

Was such a girl likely to find favour with the precise Lady Pope? She sat on, in deep indignation, scolding Anna, who was not in fault, and believing that Miss Carnagie had retired to her own room, to indulge her idle habit of lying down, or to browbeat Nana. All at once, the clatter of horses' feet was heard on the gravel. Lady Pope raised her ear, touched her chair, and went whirling away to the window. Riding off, followed by a groom, was Miss Carnagie, in the company of Arthur Ashley.

Every nerve of propriety possessed by Lady Pope was tingling. Her chair reeled off to the fireplace, and the bell was rung violently. It was to summon the baronet: but Sir Harry was gone to the Sessions at Stopton. For two mortal hours her ladyship sat, feeding her indignation, and then the runagates entered. Only to increase it. For Miss Carnagie coolly said that they had had a delightful ride, and she should go again whenever she pleased. If Lady Pope forbid Anna Rivers to make one of the party, that the three might play propriety, her ladyship had nobody to thank but herself if they went without her.

"How in the world can you have been brought up?" demanded the astonished Lady Pope.

"Brought up!" echoed Miss Carnagie, who was determined not to "give in," "I was with mamma in England for seven years; from four years old till eleven; and then she took me back to Madras with a governess."

But if Miss Carnagie was in disgrace with Lady Pope, she found favour with her guardian. In her wilful ways, Sir Harry saw but charming grace; with her ready speech and her great beauty, he was more than fascinated. Miss Carnagie certainly possessed the art of attracting men to her side: no doubt her manners, to them, were more courteous than those she exhibited to Lady Pope. She privately told Sir Harry that Lady Pope was an ugly old tyrant, and Sir Harry enjoyed the confidence. His attention to her was growing more pointed than is usual from guardian to ward, and visitors to Ashley whispered, among themselves, that the place would soon have a second mistress. If Lady Pope had only suspected that!

But it appeared that visitors were reckoning without their host.

For Sir Harry's manner suddenly changed. He grew cool in his intercourse with Miss Carnagie, and, indeed, took to hold himself very much aloof altogether from home society, spending his time abroad, or in his own rooms. So much the more pleasing to Miss Carnagie. For Sir Harry Ashley she cared not; but a passion, strong and ardent as her own nature, had taken root within her for his nephew and heir. From the first moment she saw Arthur Ashley, he had made a deep impression on her. More fascinating, both in looks and manner, than any man she had hitherto known, it scarcely needed the opportunities, which were undoubtedly afforded in abundance, for this impression to grow into love. She already indulged visions of the future, when he should be her husband, hers only and for all time; when he should parade her to the world, his chosen and envied wife: she indulged in visions of her future sway as mistress of Ashley; for Lauretta Carnagie hankered after position, and possessed a love of money and social power. Her life in Madras had been one of pomp and luxury: but this same pomp and luxury had made considerable inroads on the fortune of General and Mrs. Carnagie, and when they died, the former but three months subsequent to the latter, it was found that their impoverished estate would afford but a few hundreds per annum for their daughter. Double its whole amount had hitherto been expended on her dress alone. So she sought Arthur Ashley's society, or he hers, or perhaps the seeking was mutual; at any rate, they were much together. Which was scarcely justifiable on Mr. Ashley's part, for an attachment, a real attachment, known to none, subsisted between himself and Anna Rivers. Almost from the first, Anna had detected the pleasure Miss Carnagie took in Mr. Ashley's society, and the bitter pains of jealousy were aroused in her heart. Had this wild Indian girl come to supplant her? It seemed like it. And Anna had no means of showing her resentment, save by absenting herself from Mr. Ashley's presence.

But it happened one warm summer evening that Anna met him in the shrubbery. He stopped and drew her arm within his, and greeted her familiarly and tenderly, as was formerly his wont.

"Let me alone, Mr. Ashley," she angrily replied. "Your right to treat me so has passed."

"Not passed yet, Anna," he rejoined, retaining her arm; "not till an explanation has taken place between us. Tell me the reason of your recent coldness. Why is it you have lately shunned me?"

Anna Rivers was superior to coquetry; moreover, she loved Arthur Ashley too well to indulge in it; and she looked at him in surprise.

"My conduct has only been regulated by yours," she said. "Ask yourself what that has been."

"Anna, let us clear up this bugbear between us. I suspect where the offence lies—in my being so much with Miss Carnagie. If this has given you uneasiness, I sincerely beg your pardon. We have

been together a great deal: I acknowledge it: but the fault has not been wholly mine."

"Mine, perhaps?" resentfully spoke Anna.

"Yes," he laughed, "for leaving me so much to myself; and also—if I may whisper it to you—Miss Carnagie's. She might have sought me less. Oh, Anna, you are a regular goose! These flighty damsels are worth their weight in gold to flirt with, but for anything else—excuse me. Why, I would not marry Lauretta Carnagie if the East India Company dowered her with all their possessions."

Now if the intelligent reader can imagine him—or her—self in Miss Carnagie's shoes, they may perhaps picture what might be that young lady's sensations when she heard this candid avowal of Ashley's heir: and hear it she did, for she was on the other side of the shrubbery hedge. All her wild blood, inherited from her half-caste West Indian mother, rose to boiling-water heat; nay, more like to bubbles of liquid fire. Never had she suspected that there was aught but common friendship between him and Miss Rivers.

Forgetful of all maidenly reserve, casting aside all delicacy of feeling, her veins tingling, her face glowing, and her splendid eyes flashing as with a tiger's fury, Lauretta Carnagie passed through an opening of the shrubbery, and stood before her rival and Mr. Ashley. Upon which Miss Rivers drew away from the latter, and stood proud and defiant, and the gentleman would have given all his pockets were worth, if some kind gust of wind, stronger than ordinary, had just then soared him aloft, and deposited him in any other spot of this wide earth. Serve you right, Mr. Arthur, for you have been unpardonably sweet upon that impulsive girl. Your conscience is telling you so: and it is of no use to mutter over the advice of the old song *now*, and register a vow to yourself that you will practically remember it, for evermore henceforth, if your good stars will only get you out of this one scrape—"It is well to be off with the old love, before we are on with the new."

"You have been professing to love me; you have been professing to love *her*," was the address of Miss Carnagie, while her frame trembled with passion, and the glow on her cheeks was fading to the hue of the grave. "Which of those pretensions was false, which genuine?"

For perhaps the first time in his life, before a woman, Arthur Ashley quailed, and his tongue forgot its honeyed readiness. Enough to make him. She stood, hot and fiery as her own clime, on one side, bending towards him to devour his answer; whilst on the other, she whom he really loved and had chosen for his bride, was drawn up like a repellent piece of marble.

His senses partially came to him. He took Anna's hand. "Allow me to conduct you to the house," he said "while I explain to Miss Carnagie. One moment," he deprecatingly added to the latter; "I will not keep you waiting longer."

Anna had no resource but to go, though she would have preferred to hear my gentleman "explain." "A sharp breeze," he whispered to her: "It will be the sooner over. On my soul it is her fault, more than mine: her foolish vanity has brought it on herself. Still, Anna, I humbly beg you to forgive me."

She did not answer. She only snatched away her hand, and sailed on by his side, in sullen silence. He saw her indoors, went back again, and Lauretta Carnagie met him.

"One word, Mr. Ashley," she vehemently uttered. "Do you love that girl, Anna Rivers?"

"Miss Rivers and I are old friends," he evasively answered.

"Tamper with me if you dare," she retorted. "I ask if Anna Rivers is anything to you?"

"What the deuce—let it come out—she can't shoot me," disjointly muttered Mr. Arthur. "It is probable that Anna Rivers may sometime be my wife," he said aloud, but in a low tone. "Not yet; perhaps not for years to come. But, Lauretta——"

"If you had behaved to me *so* in my father's house, in our own country; talked to me as you have done, you, nearly a married man, I would have had you scourged by the slaves. Scourged, sir, till you should have borne the marks for life."

Every manly feeling within him was stung to the quick, and he coloured to the roots of his fair hair. "Do not let us quarrel, Lauretta," he said. "Nothing has happened that need interrupt our friendship. If you, or I, ever caught ourselves dreaming that a warmer tie might hereafter unite us, why I suppose we must forget it."

"There is one thing I will never forget," she hissed in his ear—"what you have said this evening. It was well done of you, Arthur Ashley, to speak insultingly of me to *her*. I will wear those words in my heart until I am avenged."

She stalked away towards the house in her wild anger, and Mr. Ashley, breathing a blessing upon women in general and himself in particular, strode in another direction. "I'll go away for a day or two," thought he, "and give the thing time to blow over."

Revenge Miss Carnagie had spoken of, and revenge she meant to have; how, she did not see or know as yet. Perhaps it was nearer than she could have hoped. By way of a beginning, she went straight to Lady Pope in the drawing-room.

"Are you aware that there is a love affair afloat between Mr. Ashley and your daughter?" she said abruptly.

Lady Pope would have screamed, but for compromising her dignity. For Mrs. Wainwright, a visitor at Ashley, stood at her chair-elbow and heard the bold assertion. She waved Miss Carnagie away.

"Did you know that there was a clandestine affair going on between them?" persisted Miss Carnagie, who was not one to be waved away by Lady Pope.

"Where can you have learnt all these shocking words?" demanded Lady Pope at length. "'Clandestine affair!' Really, Miss Carnagie——"

"Did you know it, I ask?" she pertinaciously interrupted.

"Madam," was the stiff response of Lady Pope, "the word clandestine can never be coupled with my daughter's name. She would enter into no such engagement: I will answer for it. And I know not by what law of politeness you, a young stranger, come into my brother's house and thus presume to comment upon family matters." Saying which, her ladyship, calling hastily for the help of her maid, ascended to her dressing-room.

"You have committed high treason," laughed Mrs. Wainwright. "It is suspected that Lady Pope's heart is set upon her daughter becoming Lady Ashley. Arthur won't do for her, now that his hopes of succeeding to Ashley are fading."

Miss Carnagie raised her head quickly. "I thought Arthur was the heir to Ashley."

"Pooh, my dear! I would not give two pins for his chance now. Sir Harry is safe to marry again."

"And if he did—who would succeed?" breathlessly asked Miss Carnagie.

"Why his own children, of course; his eldest son. Don't you understand these things? Arthur Ashley will be ready to cut the bride's throat, whoever she may be, for cutting out himself."

Miss Carnagie drew a long breath, and left Mrs. Wainwright without answer. She went to her own room, sent out Nana, with an imperious gesture, who happened to be there, sat down, and closed her eyes *to think*. She was capable of earnest self-communing, possessing the faculty of concentration in an unusual degree. Rapid and vehement in all her ways, her decision was taken ere she had sat there many minutes. "It will keep *him* out of Ashley," she muttered as she rose: "to do that, I would sacrifice myself to —to—a worse sacrifice than this will be. Wealth and position will at least be mine. And better be an old man's darling than a young man's slave!" Away she went down stairs towards the dining-room.

"Is Sir Harry in there still?" she inquired of a servant, whom she met near the door. "Mr. Ashley is not with him?"

"Mr. Ashley has just rode off to Brooklands, miss. He thinks of stopping a day or two, and I am now going to put up his carpet-bag and send it after him. Sir Harry is alone."

Lauretta Carnagie opened the dining-room door softly, and closed it after her. It was nearly dusk then, and Sir Harry had left the table, and was sitting in his easy-chair near the large window. He rose up in surprise at sight of Miss Carnagie, as she advanced close to him, and took up her position against the window-frame. She looked at him, but did not at first speak. Was she considering his personal

attractions? They were such that many a woman might have admired. It was true he was no longer to be called young, but not a shade of silver mixed with his glossy hair; not a wrinkle, as yet, defaced his broad forehead. Time had been considerate to Sir Henry Ashley. In that dim, uncertain light, he might have been taken for but a few years past thirty. Miss Carnagie spoke at last, dropping her eyes to the ground.

"I have been thinking how ungrateful I was, so positively to refuse —what you asked me. And I——"

"My dear child," he interrupted, "say no more. I ought not to have laid myself open to a certain refusal. The pain that inflicted brought me to my senses; and if I have since secluded myself, scarcely meeting you but at meals, it has not been from any resentful feeling towards you, but that I would get over the too warm interest I had felt for you."

Miss Carnagie did not answer: perhaps the purport of Sir Harry's speech was different from what she expected. He continued:

"My wife I married in early life. To say I loved her would be wrong; I never did. My sister wished the match between us; I mistook friendship for love, and fell into it. She was a good wife to me, and our life was calm: I can say no more for it. But when you came, Lauretta, when we had mixed together in habits of intimacy, when I had protected you as my ward, then, indeed, I found what it was to love. I gave way to it without consideration. I forgot that my years had passed their meridian, and that yours were yet in their dawn, and like a fool, I hazarded my fate—and met with a refusal. I am speaking now more calmly, you see, than I could at the time."

"But," she resumed in a low tone, "I came this evening to tell you that—I—think I was mistaken as well as hasty."

A silence ensued. When Sir Harry broke it, his voice was hoarse with emotion.

"I am not sure that I understand—that I dare understand. Lauretta, that one repulsion cost me dear: I will not hazard another. Give me fully to understand what you really mean."

"Would you be pleased if I say I retract my refusal, and ask you to pardon it?"

"*Pleased!* Lauretta!"

"That if you will take me with my faults and my wilfulness, I am ready to say you may have me?"

"You are not deceiving me?" he murmured.

"I *never* deceive," she answered, with so passionate a touch of scorn in her tone, that one in the secret might know she was thinking of how she had been deceived by Arthur Ashley.

He flung his arms round her, and gave utterance to the deep love she had excited in his heart: all the stronger for its recent suppression. That a passion so powerful should have arisen in Sir Henry Ashley, with his nearly fifty years! But so it was.

"I trust I am guilty of no dishonour in thus winning you for myself —of no breach of the confidence imposed in me by your father," he said, in a musing manner, half to himself, half to her. "My position is one to which even he could not object, and the contrast in our years is, it seems to me, a consideration for you alone."

"For no one else," she answered.

"Lauretta! how we may deceive ourselves!" he went on. "Shall I tell you a notion that has recently possessed me?—that you and Arthur were becoming attached to each other. You were so much together. Poor fellow! this will be a blow to his prospects. Had I foreseen Lady Ashley's premature death, I never would have adopted him, or encouraged the notion of his inheritance."

A curious expression passed over her face. But at this moment, after a sharp knocking, as with a stick, the door was flung open, and who should enter but Lady Pope, her crutch on one side of her, her maid on the other, the latter bearing a flaring candle. Setting that on the table, and her mistress on a chair, she retired from the room. Sir Harry came forward, his brow darkening: "To what accident was he to attribute Lady Pope's intrusion?"

Lady Pope did not tell him. We can. She was sitting with her dressing-room door open, partly for air, partly that she might see all the passing and re-passing in the passages, when a servant came by with a packed carpet-bag, which sne recognised as Arthur's, and she demanded where that was going to. To Brooklands, the man answered. Mr. Arthur was gone over there.

Up went her ladyship's curiosity. What was he gone there for, so suddenly? Did Sir Harry know? Where was Sir Harry?

Sir Harry was still in the dining-room. Miss Carnagie was with him.

Miss Carnagie! echoed Lady Pope. The servant must be mistaken.

Oh no. He had seen her go in with his own eyes, and close the door.

This was a climax for Lady Pope. Why, what possessed this girl, that she was turning the whole house topsy-turvy? Go and shut herself in with Sir Harry before he had left the dining-room! She would tell her, this moment, what she thought of such conduct. "Send my maid here instantly!" she exclaimed to the servant.

So the maid and the crutch and Lady Pope, and a candle to guide her ladyship's steps, for the staircase lamps were not yet alight, sailed into the dining-room, and Sir Harry inquired to what cause he was to attribute the intrusion.

"I came to ascertain to what cause may be attributed *hers*," was Lady Pope's sarcastic rejoinder. "Really, Sir Harry—and I am glad to have the opportunity of saying this to you in her presence—unless Miss Carnagie can conform to the usages of decent society, I would recommend you to resign your guardianship, and suffer her to depart."

"In what way has Miss Carnagie transgressed them?" demanded Sir Harry.

"In what way does she not? A most unpardonable transgression is her coming here, at this hour, in this room, and remaining in it with you."

"I shall not eat her," said Sir Harry.

"Sir Harry Ashley," resumed Lady Pope, in a crushing voice, "if you deem my visit here an *intrusion* to be noticed in words, by what name can you designate hers? You may be forgetful of forms and propriety—men generally are—but it is my place to see that they are observed by, and towards, Miss Carnagie. Miss Carnagie, you will oblige me by quitting this room with me. Sir Harry, call in my maid. I told her to wait outside."

"Miss Carnagie remains here with me," returned Sir Harry. "We will join you when tea is ready. You seem to overlook the fact that, as guardian and ward, we may have business to transact together."

"Not at unseasonable hours," persisted the exasperated Lady Pope. "If Miss Carnagie remains here, I shall. It is really quite —quite improper, Sir Harry. I'll thank you to order the chandelier lighted, if we are to stay. That candle hurts my eyes."

Sir Harry was provoked—as he could be, very much so, on occasions. "Lady Pope," he said, "you are assuming rather too much. I, as Miss Carnagie's guardian, am a competent judge for her of what is proper. That I shall guard her from what is improper you may well believe, when I inform you that in her you see my future wife."

Had Poor Lady Pope received a dose of chloroform she could not have been more completely overcome. Her mouth opened, her chin fell, down dropped her arms, and down went her crutch with a rattle. Sir Harry had drawn Miss Carnagie's arm within his, and they both stood facing her.

"The future wife—*yours?*" were the first words she gasped.

"My own dear future wife, Lady Ashley."

"Are you bereft of your senses, Henry Ashley, or am I?" she inquired. "If I am not, I would ask if you have reflected on the miserable consequences that this will entail? The cruelty, the injustice to Arthur Ashley?"

"Enough," peremptorily interrupted Sir Henry, as he flung open the door and summoned the maid, who stood very close to it, to take away her mistress. "Order tea," he said to her ladyship: "we will soon be with you."

Lady Pope meekly obeyed, and prepared to leave with the servant. Her spirit was completely stricken down, and lay (as may be said) in dust and ashes. But first of all she beckoned Sir Harry to her, and, drawing him down, whispered in his ear:

"Henry, my brother, one word—for your own sake. Is this inevitable?"

He nodded.

"Oh, think better of it! If it be possible break it off. She is not a woman to make any husband happy. She will make *you* miserable."

"No more," he coldly said. But she held him still.

"Henry, do you hear me? *miserable.*"

"I hear," was the indifferent, almost contemptuous reply. "I will chance it."

The neighbourhood was electrified when it heard that Sir Harry Ashley was to marry his ward; not only electrified, but shocked. Sir Harry, for the last twelve or fifteen months, had been looked upon as a high prize in the matrimonial lottery, and everyone was ready to devour Miss Carnagie alive. She came in for the usual share of abuse: some ventured to speak against her to Sir Harry. She was too young, and too wilful, and too poor, and too proud, and too———a great many other things; but Sir Harry was too much for them all, and held to his bargain.

The wedding took place in Liverpool in the month of October, Miss Carnagie being married from the house of her late father's friends there, Nabob and Mrs. Call. Anna Rivers was bridesmaid, and perhaps she was the only one, save the parties themselves, who rejoiced in the union. But she could not overget the miserable jealousy Miss Carnagie had caused to her heart, or the general discomfort she had brought to Ashley.

Arthur Ashley was joked, rallied and condoled with. It was certainly a grievous disappointment, but he behaved magnanimously, and would not show it. Sir Harry handed over to him the writings of Thorncliff, a small estate, worth a few hundreds a-year, and promised something about a government appointment. "Don't thank me for Thorncliff," he said; "I'll listen to nothing in the shape of thanks. I feel as if I had injured you, and this is a sop in the pan. But cheer up, my boy, who knows? you may be Sir Arthur yet."

Arthur answered good-humouredly that the chances were against it. He knew they were. And he knew also—his conscience was telling it to him at that very moment—that the fading away of his inheritance had been partly brought about by his own folly—that he had himself to thank for having lost Ashley.

(*To be continued.*)

A SHORT DIARY OF THE DAYS GONE BY.

The following extracts from an account of a journey to Calais in 1814 *may interest the reader, as affording a glimpse of the manners and customs of the early part of this century; and as touching upon scenes and persons that have passed into History. The MS. has remained until now with the daughter of the writer of the Diary, to whom it passed upon the Author's death.*

EMBARKED for Calais in a Deal boat at half-past one o'clock on Thursday, 14th April, 1814; fine weather till four, when it began to rain and blow, the wind changing every minute, and being at times quite tremendous. At five o'clock we were greatly alarmed by an English brig making signal for us not to proceed: five guns were fired at us, and it was half-an-hour before we were relieved from our anxiety. They merely requested us to take a letter from the brother of Talleyrand (whom we saw in the vessel) to Calais.

We proceeded; the weather continued unfavourable, the wind went round the compass in the course of ten minutes, and as soon as it abated we were becalmed. At length, at about half-past ten o'clock, we entered the harbour, which is a remarkably fine one with a wooden pier a quarter of a mile long. The water being low we soon ran aground, and being obliged to cast anchor, we were detained some time. As soon as we got clear again, the gentlemen went ashore in the little boat and with difficulty towed us along. About eleven o'clock we landed on the pier, and here a new difficulty arose from the gates of Calais being shut, which is always done at eight o'clock in the evening; and, had it not been for the letter which we received from the brig, I know not whether we should have gained admittance. In this respect we were fortunate, and were happy to find ourselves at half-past eleven at Dessein's Hotel, which is extremely large: but although they make up a hundred beds, we were so unlucky as to find them all engaged. However, we sat down to a comfortable supper with a good appetite, having had no dinner, and presently had the satisfaction of being shown into an apartment containing three small beds, which, although they could not boast much comfort, afforded us that rest we so much needed, for we were all dreadfully fatigued from the length of our passage.

Friday, April 15th, 1814.

About ten o'clock this morning we arose much refreshed, and after breakfast took a walk on the pier and in the town. The latter is larger than Deal, with a fine town hall, market place, and one church. The streets are tolerably wide, but very inconvenient to

foot-passengers, people being obliged to walk in the carriage road, as there is no broad stone. The houses have a dirty, shabby appearance; they are built of yellow bricks, and look smoke-dried. The fortifications all round the town are very strong. You enter by five gates on the English side, which to me resembled the entrance to a prison more than anything else.

Our reception was most flattering, being the first English ladies who had landed on that coast for many years. The people followed us all the time we were walking, giving us their blessing, and crying, "Vive Louis XVIII.!" Every countenance was expressive of the greatest joy and satisfaction.

There is a small town enclosed within a high wall, on the outside of the gates of Calais, for the fishermen and their families. It is composed of seven narrow dirty streets, but the inhabitants appeared particularly happy, and testified their joy on seeing us even more than those of the upper town. I think I never saw such beautiful children, but dreadfully dirty, owing, I suppose, to their being so numerous.

We returned to dinner at about four o'clock, which was served up in a curious manner. One dish is brought in first, and when everyone has eaten of that, it is taken away, and replaced by another, and thus throughout the dinner; they eat scarcely any vegetable, and very little pastry, sugar being five shillings a pound. They generally drink claret, and mix it with water for their dinner, instead of beer, which is not so good as in England. We drank tea with Mr. and Mrs. Collett, English people; they have a very nice house, handsomely furnished, something in the style of our own country. Tea was handed in coffee cups, which is the custom in France. The sideboard was covered with plate (a little silver cow served as cream jug), elegant waiters and silver urns, etc. Played at Boston in the evening, a French game with cards for four. Returned home to supper.

Saturday, April 16th, 1814.

We took a walk to the market, which is the finest I ever saw, it resembles a fair. The stalls are arranged in rows; the corn is placed in sacks, and you may inspect it before you purchase, which certainly is a good regulation. Everything is remarkably cheap: fine turkeys five shillings each; eggs twenty-six for sevenpence halfpenny, and all in proportion, but things are getting up very fast owing to the great demand to carry to England. The women and children all wear caps and handkerchiefs instead of bonnets, which I observe are always clean, but the rest of the dress is miserable. The town-crier came into the market with the lid of a kettle, which he struck instead of a bell, to our great amusement. After we had rambled about here some time, we walked to the fort nearest Fort Rouge, and examined the cannons and mortars, some of which are very fine. Returned home to dinner, after which, went on to the pier till tea. Mr. Mansel and his sister spent the evening with us. Played Boston.

Sunday, April 17th.

Mr. M. Morley returned to England. At half-past twelve o'clock all our party, with Miss Gaudoin and M. de la Loude, set off for Cologne, a pretty little village two miles from Calais, where M. de Flin resides, and with whom we spent the day. He has a large house and grounds; the former is singularly built, the rooms are high pitched and octagon, no carpets, and chairs with rush bottoms. Comfort does not appear to be a consideration in France. We took a walk to a pretty little wood, in the centre of which is a monument and grave of a young lady, a friend of Mrs. Scholey's, who died of love at the age of twenty-one.

We spent the afternoon in singing. Returned to Calais at nine o'clock and sang till bed-time.

Monday, April 18th.

We arose at five o'clock, took breakfast, and set out with Miss Gaudoin and M. de la Loude, in addition to our own party, in a coach and three horses for Boulogne, four-and-twenty miles from Calais—an excellent road all the way, but hilly. Boulogne is larger than Calais. It is composed of the upper and lower town. There is a fine church, which we were permitted to go into. Three beautiful altar-pieces, with large silver candlesticks, ten in number—the cross, fish, etc., of silver. The body of the church is very large and contains a fine organ, on which I played, to the great delight of one of the priests who was with us. He was a very pleasant man, full of conversation, and extremely polite in explaining and showing us everything.

The army destined to invade England was encamped on a high hill on each side of the harbour, in which lay the flotilla. The mud walls of the tents still remain, and have a curious appearance. They are built regularly in rows like streets, but they are clearing them away for the sake of the land. Two hundred thousand men lived here for six years. The Emperor was often with the army; but, from the frequent repulses he met with from the English, was always in bad humour. So sure was he in his own mind of success with this grand flotilla, that he had already begun to erect a monument in commemoration of the event. The scaffolding, which still remains, cost many thousands. The monument, I think, was but little advanced. From the camp you have a fine command of the town and harbour—which, as the Emperor was admiral of the fleet, was requisite. The ramparts enclosing the town are excessively pretty, and are about a mile round. From here you have a charming view of the environs, which are certainly fine. We dined at an English hotel, where we met with anything but civility—in this they are truly deficient. While amusing ourselves at the windows, we saw a Chevalier de St. Louis enter the courtyard. We were all amusing ourselves at this poor man's expense (for a more ridiculous figure and complete caricature I never beheld), when, to our great confusion and

surprise, Mrs. Scholey led him into the room, introduced him, and invited him to spend the day with us, although a perfect stranger to her as well as to us all—but he was a Chevalier de St. Louis, and that was sufficient for Mrs. S. I shall now describe his dress, which caused us so much mirth. He was a very tall thin old man, I should imagine he must have been nearly ninety; he had on a scarlet velvet coat and small-clothes of the same, an under waistcoat of fawn colour, and the outer one of green satin (these were laid open to display an uncommon broad shirt frill), white stockings and half boots, an immense cocked hat with a high feather, and a large stick in his hand, on which he sported several rings. He wore the croix de St. Louis round his neck, which he politely took off to show us. His manners were gentlemanly, and in spite of the singularity of his appearance his figure was truly venerable.

We returned to Calais at about ten o'clock, dreadfully tired, and after a good supper went to bed, highly gratified with the variety of the day.

Tuesday, April 19th.

It rained for an hour or two, but cleared off towards noon. Took a walk in the town. Mr. and Mrs. Morley had a large party to dinner, and we all went in the evening to Mr. Mansel, where we met a large party. Tea was handed in coffee cups, and many kinds of curious cake in great quantities, immediately after which wine was sent round, to my great astonishment; but I soon learnt that French ladies never drink tea, therefore this was made out of compliment to us. The lady of the house made up three card tables, and the rest of the company—about sixteen young persons—formed a circle and sang in turns. After the card players had finished we all danced, first a French cotillon, then an English country-dance, and, lastly, what they call a round, but what I should call a kissing dance, as there is more of that than anything else. We returned home about eleven o'clock. M. de la Loude supped with us.

Wednesday, April 20th.

A wet day. We dined at Mr. Collett's, and met Mr. and Mrs. de Flin. A most elegant dinner. M. de la Loude and Miss Mansel came to tea. Played forfeits in the evening.

Thursday, April 21st.

Spent the evening at Madame Belchasse's, and heard her daughters play on the harp and sing beautifully. They lent us a great deal of music.

Friday, April 22nd.

Took a walk on the pier, and saw the prisoners of war from England disembark. Miss Betsy Gaudoin drank tea with us.

Saturday, April 23rd.

Walked out with Miss Gaudoin to make a few purchases, and

rambled about till dinner, after which we packed up things to remove. Mr. and Mrs. Morley being obliged to leave Dessein's Hotel, as Louis XVIII. was expected the next day, and the apartments they then occupied were destined for the Duke of Bourbon. Mr. and Mrs. de Flin left Cologne, and came to reside in Calais for a year.

Sunday, April 24th.

At half-past eleven we left Dessein's Hotel, and went to hear military Mass. The church of Notre Dame is not so large nor near so handsome as that at Boulogne. The great and principal Altar-piece is now building, and is dedicated to the Virgin. There is a fine organ and some paintings tolerably well executed, among which, according to my judgment, the Ascension ranks first. Mass was over in about an hour. We took an early dinner at M. de Flin's, and immediately repaired to the church to await the arrival of the King. The heart of the church is enclosed with iron rails, close to which we placed ourselves, standing upon chairs, that we might overlook the guards who were to be stationed within, and thus get a full view of His Majesty, for whom, in the middle of the enclosure, directly facing the Altar, a pretty throne was prepared. Under a canopy of white silk, embroidered and tied in festoons with gold, was placed a large armchair of crimson damask, and, at about three feet in front, a cushion of the same to kneel on—this, of course, was for the King. There were three more chairs of the same, two on the right of the throne, for the Prince of Condé and the Duke of Bourbon, and one on the left, for the Duchess of Angoulême. The whole was arranged with the greatest taste and elegance.

At half-past three, the *Royal Sovereign* yacht, with several brigs, barges, etc., entered the harbour; an open carriage was in waiting to conduct the Royal family to church, to which they immediately repaired. The band played, and the drums beat in the church so loudly that the windows really shook. "Vive le roi," "Vive Louis XVIII.," "Vivent les Bourbons" resounded from all parts. The Guards of Honour rushed in first with drawn swords, and formed themselves in rows; the King was attended by an immense train of English and French nobility; he walked under a canopy, supported by the clergy; the Prince of Condé, Duke of Bourbon, and the Duchess of Angoulême followed. Mass was then performed. The King was truly devout, and appeared much affected. Twelve young ladies of Calais, dressed in white crape over satin, sang the Te Deum.

Just before the conclusion of Divine Service we returned to our apartments, that we might avoid the crowd and have a good view of the procession to Dessein's Hotel, to which the carriage containing the Royal family was conveyed, or rather, dragged by the populace. The streets were sanded, and strewed with flowers, etc.; the houses almost covered with curtains, sheets, table-cloths, etc. Every window and balcony was crowded with countenances expressive of the greatest

joy and satisfaction. His Majesty seemed deeply to feel this warm reception; he sat with hands clasped, and looked with smiles of content and gratitude on all who surrounded him.

Hearing he intended dining in public, we hastened to the hotel, where we found that ladies only were to be admitted: many were to take that opportunity of being introduced, and accordingly made themselves very smart for the occasion; but, as we had no idea of receiving so great an honour, we did not think it worth while to change our dress. We entered a small court, adjacent to the dining-room, where we remained for half-an-hour, nearly suffocated. I never saw such an immense crowd of women. I really expected to be crushed. Here we might have remained for hours, had we not, fortunately, met with a gentleman of Mr. Morley's acquaintance, who being one of the Guards of Honour, conducted us through a private door to the dining-room. Miss Gaudoin, Mercy and I were together, but separated from the rest of our friends, who were all dispersed among the crowd.

We immediately placed ourselves behind the King's chair, on whose right hand sat the Duchess of Angoulême, who, hearing us address each other in English, turned round, asked if we were English ladies, and began to converse with us with the greatest affability. The Duke of Bourbon, who was seated next to the Duchess, shook hands with us and joined in the conversation. He was extremely polite, offered us refreshments from the table, and in gallantry was quite the Frenchman. The Duke introduced us to several persons near him, among whom were the Earl of Buckinghamshire and Lord Sidmouth. The latter was particularly pleasant. I stood nearest to the King, who having attended to our conversation on the happiness of the times, with the utmost condescension addressed himself to me, and said he never could repay the obligation he was under to the English, of whom he spoke with great affection. He asked if I wished to know the names of the company present, and then told me the titles of half the persons at table with him. I had the honour of speaking three different times to him during the hour we remained in the dining-room. We were likewise introduced to the Prince of Condé, who sat on the left of his Majesty.

Owing to the number of persons waiting to be admitted, the officers in attendance desired us to walk on, as we had been in the room nearly half an hour; and although we had had permission of the Duchess to stay, they said they could not allow it. We were accordingly retiring, but a gentleman at table (whom we afterwards learnt was a duke) observed we were English ladies, and taking my hand, held it a considerable time, desired us to stand close to him, apologized that he could not be allowed to offer us his seat, and conversed with the greatest affability. He introduced us to a number of persons near him, and after some time desired one of the officers to conduct us to our old station behind the King's chair, and

to suffer us to remain there as long as we thought proper. The Royal family welcomed us back, and resumed their former affability.

About twelve toasts were then given with three times three, after which his Majesty gave "Vivent mes enfants et mes armes!" "God save the King" was then sung in French, during which he appeared much affected. In the last verse but one, the Duchess of Angoulême is highly complimented for her virtues and goodness, at which time the King kissed her hand and joined in the song. The twelve young ladies then came forward. One played the harp, while the others sang "Vive Henri Quatre," after which they were introduced, and with them we retired.

Calais was illuminated. Dessein's Hotel and the Town Hall were pretty, but nothing more remarkable. We supped at M. de Flin's, and slept at Madame le Mer's.

Tuesday, April 26th.

At twelve o'clock we went to Dessein's Hotel to see the King take his departure for Boulogne, and were fortunate in getting windows that overlooked the courtyard, where the carriages were waiting. That for the King was a coach with eight miserable-looking horses, and, what was still worse, rope-harness. He left Calais amidst the acclamations of the people, and was attended by two or three Mamelukes, Polish Lancers, with other military, besides the Guards of Honour, twenty-four in number, twelve on foot and twelve on horseback. Immediately after the departure of the Royal Family, we went over the apartments they had occupied. Those of the King were large and handsome; his bed was of crimson damask and uncommonly high. From the hotel we walked towards the pier, and meeting with Lieutenant Ashley, a friend of ours; he conducted us over the *Royal Sovereign* yacht, with which I was much delighted. The apartments are elegantly fitted up, beyond anything I ever saw.

We returned to M. de Flin's to dinner, and in the afternoon (as is the custom here) called on all those families who had kindly shown us attention during our stay at Calais. We slept in our old apartments at Dessein's Hotel.

Wednesday, April 27th, 1814.

We took an early dinner, and at half-past four embarked for England in the same Deal boat that brought us. We were six hours and a half on our passage, and miserably sick; but, thank God, arrived safe at Upper Deal at twelve o'clock at night.

Hannah Sophia Hollams.

A GUILTY SILENCE.

A Story Re-told.

CHAPTER I.

HUGH RANDOLPH AT HOME.

A HOT bright morning in June, and market day at Helsingham, a quaint old-world town of some ten thousand inhabitants, in one of the Midland Counties.

Although the town-hall clock has only just struck nine, the stalls and booths in the market-place, and in the open space round the town pump, are beginning to be occupied by vendors of various kinds of merchandise—a miscellaneous surplusage of such as cannot afford to pay for, or do not care to occupy, stalls in the regular covered market, the entrance to which is through the gateway in the clock-tower.

One of the first to enter the market-place and to mix with the gathering crowd is old Mike Harrison, the blind fiddler and ballad singer, assisted carefully over the rough pavement by his little granddaughter Kitty. They are going just now to get their breakfast at some humble hostelry; but presently they may be seen about the town, always with a crowd round them, old Mike fiddling and singing, after a very rude fashion it must be confessed, while Kitty offers the ballads for sale, and pulls the old man through the higher passages with her shrill, quavering treble. As evening draws on, they will not fail to play and sing for a few minutes in front of the house of Doctor Hugh Randolph, which looks into the market-place. In return, Charlotte Herne, the doctor's cousin, will not fail to send them out the sixpence which she allows them every week, and which they have come at last to regard in the light of a small but settled income; for Charlotte herself is blind.

She is sitting there this sunny morning, close by one of the windows that look into the market-place, but shaded by the muslin curtains from the view of passers-by. The breakfast things are on the table, and she is awaiting the return of Dr. Randolph, who was called up several hours ago to attend a critical case.

Although she can see nothing of the busy scene that is being enacted outside, she knows almost every feature of it by heart. Years ago, when a girl, and before she had lost her sight, she used to accompany her mother to Helsingham market; and her retentive memory has stored up the details of many a visit on bright, sunny mornings like the present one; and in small provincial towns the

ordinary features of out-door life vary but little from one year's end to another. Then her cousin Hugh has so often sketched in for her the little odd features of the scene, that its every detail seems known to her, and Hugh is almost as good as another pair of eyes to her when he is at home, and not thoroughly tired out with running after his patients.

Charlotte had not long to wait this morning before she heard Hugh's well-known knock. She had been brooding in the listless, moody way common enough with her when alone; but the moment the sound of the knocker struck on her ear, her dark humour melted away like a dream. Starting with a glad smile from her seat by the window, she walked across the room and sat down in her place at the breakfast-table, and began to busy herself with preparations for the meal.

Few people, seeing her engaged thus, would have discovered that she was blind. She moved about the room so deftly and unhesitatingly, she knew so exactly where to find any object she might be in want of; and just now her delicate little hands went in and out among the cups and saucers, and played around coffee-pot and cream-jug so lightly and dexterously, that any stranger, not habitually a close observer, might readily have been excused for overlooking Charlotte's misfortune. Anyone, however, who had been in the habit of mixing much among blind people, would not have failed to notice the lingering, almost caressing, touch by means of which her finger-tips, educated to a nicety of feeling such as people who are blessed with eyesight can scarcely comprehend, told her the meaning and position of every object with which they came in contact.

Charlotte Herne was twenty years of age, but in size and general appearance she did not look older than many a girl of fifteen. It was not merely that she was short of stature, but she was altogether so diminutive and fragile-looking that it was difficult to believe that the slight creature before you was not the mere child you took her to be, but a woman in years, and a woman in heart and brain; and if her mind had grown somewhat morbid and askew under the pressure of her terrible misfortune, one could hardly wonder that such should be the case.

Five years had now come and gone since that never-to-be-forgotten afternoon on which she was struck by lightning while taking shelter under a tree, and was picked up senseless and blind. Her senses came back to her, sharpened and intensified, it may be, by what she had undergone; but those skilled in such matters avouched that her eyesight was lost for ever. She was not what is commonly called "stone-blind." For instance, her eyes could tell her whether the morning was dull or bright, or whether a room was lighted by candles or gas; but beyond that at present, whatever secret hopes she might cherish in her own mind as regarded the future, they would scarcely serve her.

From the day she was struck by lightning she had ceased to grow. There was, however, one singular exception to the general youthfulness of Charlotte's appearance. The rich, heavy sheaf of her chestnut hair, of which she had been so proud ever since she could remember, had, from the date of her misfortune, been slowly but surely turning grey. Its coils were still as thick and heavy as ever they had been; it still, when combed out, fell in a rippling veil below her waist; but by this time its once rich colour had faded to a dull ashen grey, lustreless and dead, like the hair of some middle-aged woman, blanched as much by tribulation as by years. But Charlotte knew nothing of this slow change and decay; she still deemed it, in gloss and hue, the same as she ever remembered it to have been, with flying gleams of gold in it whenever it caught a glint of sunshine. No one had the heart to tell her when it first began to change, and to undeceive her now would have been absolute cruelty; so the fiction that the colour of Charlotte's hair was a beautiful chestnut was tacitly acceded to by everybody to whom Charlotte was known.

The youthful face, in its setting of ashen-grey coils and braids, had a strangely weird and old-world look, such as one could readily fancy the face of some withered beldame might put on who had drunk of the elixir of youth, and suddenly grown young again in everything but her hair.

And, indeed, there were times and seasons when Charlotte's young face had an indefinable something in its expression so ancient and witch-like as might well serve to carry out such a notion still further. Yet her face, although it could not be called beautiful, had aways been accounted a comely one. Her features were small but regular, and their normal expression, especially observable when she was in the society of others, was one of girlish candour and simplicity. The little colour her cheeks might once have worn had vanished utterly; her face was now of one clear, uniform paleness, resulting, in a great measure, from her sedentary, in-door mode of life, and not necessarily betokening any particular delicacy of constitution.

Those poor, blind eyes of hers, were, after all, her best feature. They were large, bluish-grey eyes, shaded by long silken lashes, and over-arched by delicate brows, that as yet retained all the gloss and colour of youth. They seemed to follow you about the room with a pleading, anxious gaze, that had something mournful in it when you came to know how sightless they were—a fact which you would never discover from the eyes alone. On sunny days they were usually protected by a green silk shade. Few people, except the domestics, ever saw Charlotte with it on, and the moment she heard Hugh's footsteps in the passage, she would slip it off and stuff it into her pocket, being probably possessed by an idea that it did not tend to enhance her personal attractions. This morning she had on a soft, floating dress of grey alpaca, the only pronounced bit of colour about her being the bow of pink ribbon that was tied loosely round her throat.

Charlotte's breakfast arrangements were just completed when Hugh Randolph came into the room, as fresh and smiling from his cold-water douche as though he had only just arisen, instead of having been up since two a.m. in attendance on a difficult case. Charlotte's face lighted up again in the same indescribable way as she turned towards the door to greet him.

A tall, well-built young man of eight-and-twenty this Dr. Hugh Randolph; with a long and somewhat thin face; with large, straight, clear-cut features; with a clear, olive complexion, and short, straight, black hair; clean-shaven, and guiltless either of beard or moustache. A cool, self-reliant man evidently, and one who would not readily lose his presence of mind in any emergency; with yet a nameless, intangible something about him that seemed to invite confidence, and generally succeeded in winning it. A man possessed by a genuine love for his profession, who had years ago determined, in his own mind, to rise in the world by means of it, and was now slowly, but surely, effecting his end.

"Good morning, Charley," said Hugh, with a pleasant smile, as he came into the room. Then, taking Charlotte's outstretched hand, he stooped and touched her forehead with his lips. "Silly child! why did you wait breakfast for me?" he added. "I might have been detained till noon for anything you could know to the contrary."

"I had a presentiment that you would be here before long," said Charlotte; "and my presentiments generally come true. I said to myself, 'If he is not here by half-past nine, I will begin without him;' but I thought you would be here for all that. What time did you leave home this morning?"

"The clock was just striking two as I crossed the market place."

"Yes, I heard you get up, and creep downstairs with muffled footsteps, and let yourself out at the front door, although I did not know the hour. And I dare say you have gone all this time without anything to eat! You are killing yourself, Hugh, I know you are."

"On the contrary, I am taking most excellent care of myself. I had a first breakfast hours before you were out of bed; for when I got as far as Dixon's farm on my way to see old Mr. Yarnett, I found the men busy milking; and when Dixon saw me, he asked me whether I would have a bowl of new milk, to which I said 'Yes, and a crust of home-made bread with it.' So I sat down for five minutes on the mossy wall, and made a hearty breakfast, and watched the sun come up, red and fiery, above the ridges of Charke Forest. But all this talk about myself, Charley, is making me oblivious of one little fact that must on no account be forgotten. Just tell me the day of the month, will you?"

"It is the nineteenth of June," said Charlotte.

"And your birthday," answered Hugh. "I have not forgotten that, to-day, my little housekeeper—my adopted sister—is twenty

years old. And if you were my sister, dear, I could not think more of you than I do. A fortnight ago you gave me a lock of your mother's hair, with the request that I would have a little case made for it, in which it might be carefully preserved. I have had the hair braided and put into a gold locket, which, with the chain on which it hangs, I hope you will accept from me as a birthday present, together with my sincere wishes for many happy returns of the day."

Taking the locket and chain from his pocket, Hugh proceeded to fasten them round Charlotte's neck; then, laying a hand softly on each of her cheeks, and lifting up her face, he kissed her again, but this time on the lips.

Charlotte's white face flushed suddenly, as Hugh's lips touched hers, and then faded into whiteness again. For a few moments she was unable to speak.

"You are very, very kind, Hugh," she said at last. "I will wear the locket as long as I live."

With her slender fingers she felt the pattern of the chain, and the shape and size of the locket; and Hugh showed her how to open and shut it; and then she pressed it fervently to her lips, and hid it away, with a happy smile, in the bosom of her dress.

"And now for breakfast," said Hugh gaily, "for I am as hungry as a hunter. I'll tell you what I've been thinking, Charley," he went on, after a little while. "I have several times promised Mr. Chorlton that I would run over and see him at Hill Nook. So, as it's your birthday, and as the weather is fine, and as my patients just now are not very troublesome, I'll borrow Grimson's horse and gig this afternoon, and drive you over to the Nook. The outing will do you good. Mrs. Chorlton is a nice, motherly old lady; and I understand they have a famous garden there; and, like the young person in the nursery rhyme, you shall feast to your heart's content on 'strawberries, sugar and cream.'"

"That will be delightful, Hugh," said Charlotte, and the expression of her face showed that her words were sincere. "There—I cannot eat any more breakfast after what you have told me."

"Foolish child!" said Hugh. "You ought to be able to eat all the more in anticipation, as I do."

The postman's knock sounded below, and presently a letter was brought up for Hugh. He opened and read it in silence, and his face clouded as he read it.

"Another cup, Hugh?" said Charlotte.

"Thanks, no," he answered; and the changed tone of his voice struck her sensitive ear.

"You have heard bad news?" she said anxiously.

"Not exactly bad news," he replied. "This letter is from my London correspondent, he of whom I have spoken to you once or twice. He tells me that the search, begun twelve weary months ago,

is still unsuccessful, and he writes to know whether I am desirous of still going on with it."

"But you will give it up now, Hugh, will you not?" said Charlotte. "She may be dead, for anything you know to the contrary; or, even if still alive, so deeply hidden in that great world of London that you would never find her, were you to search for twenty years."

"It may be as you say," replied Dr. Randolph, as he rose from the table and began slowly to pace the room. "But I won't be discouraged just yet. I shall write back to my correspondent and bid him go on with the search as actively as before. Pray Heaven he may be successful at last!"

Neither of them spoke for a minute or two, and Hugh continued his slow pacing to and fro.

"What a little time it seems," he went on, "since I looked upon that girl as the one sole prize in life worth living for; and a still shorter time since I deemed that her falsehood had rendered me miserable for ever, and that my affections were dead, and buried in the grave she had dug for them. Yet here I am, as contented and happy, I dare say, as most of my neighbours; and if I have chosen to form no new tie of a similar nature, it is simply because I prefer to retain my freedom awhile, and not because my old wounds are still unhealed. Such is the philosophy, little one, that Time teaches us as we grow older. We are like children, many of us; we idolise a toy one day, only to cast it carelessly aside the next."

"She was unworthy of you, Hugh—in every way unworthy," said Charlotte; "and it makes me very glad to think that you have learnt to forget her."

"I have not forgotten her, Charley; that I shall never do. But the love I once thought would last for ever has gradually withered and died, without any wish or action of my own—almost, indeed, against my wish; for out of very shame, having made so many grand vows and promises to myself, I did strive to cherish it a little when I found it slipping from me. From which confession you will readily deduce one fact—that, even with the best intentions, we men are still but faithless creatures." He smiled a little bitterly, and then took up his hat. "But moralising here won't cure my patients," he added; "so good morning, Charley; and be sure to be ready by three o'clock."

CHAPTER II.

CHARLOTTE'S BIRTHDAY.

CHARLOTTE HERNE was the daughter of a well-to-do yeoman, who had farmed a small estate about a dozen miles from Helsingham.

Both her parents died within a few months of each other, shortly after she had lost her eyesight. Dr. Randolph's mother, at that time alive and managing her son's household, being Charlotte's nearest living

relation, the bereaved girl was at once transferred to Helsingham, and took up her abode under the Doctor's roof; and there she had remained ever since.

Mrs. Randolph had died about eighteen months before the opening of our story; and blind though she was, Charlotte had at once stepped into the old lady's place as manager of the little household, with Peggy Lawson, a family servant of thirty years' standing, to assist her. Charlotte had a small income of her own—about seventy pounds a year—which had been settled on her for life, so that she was in a measure independent of any one, and need not have stayed with her cousin Hugh unless she had been so minded.

But she was so minded, for she loved Hugh better than all the world beside. She had loved him ever since she was a girl of ten; at first, as a child loves, afterwards, as a woman loves. For, when Charlotte was ten years old, Hugh, at that time a lanky youth of eighteen, who had outgrown his strength, had been sent down to Dipplewade to recruit his health; and from that day to the present one, Charlotte's affection for him, growing with her growth, had known no whisper of change.

Dr. Randolph's house, which, together with the practice, he had bought from his predecessor, was considerably larger than the requirements of his modest household necessitated, so that when Charlotte came, and added one more to the family, and brought with her a considerable quantity of furniture from the old farm, he was able to set aside the whole of the upper floor for her service. This was just what Charlotte delighted in—to have a little domain of her own, sacred from intrusion, where she could wander about at her own sweet will—for she was one of the most restless of mortals—and be unwatched by prying eyes.

Of the rooms thus granted her, Charlotte had furnished two only, a spacious sitting-room and an airy bedroom. The rest she allowed to stand empty, but none the less did she consider them as a portion of her own territory; and at night especially, when one of her restless moods was on her, she would wander in and out from one empty chamber to another, for hours together, muttering fretfully to herself, or restlessly counting over and over again the shining beads of her amber rosary. She knew well that the stout oak floors of the old house would allow no sound of her light footfall to disturb the slumbers of those below. As a further line of demarcation between her domain and the rest of the house, she had had a green baize door fixed at the top of the flight of stairs leading to her rooms, which door she could bolt inside at pleasure. But her most precious moments were those which she spent with Hugh at meal-times, in the family room below; and sometimes of an evening, when Hugh had no outdoor engagements, she would creep down to the sitting-room for an hour or two, and persuade him to read to her, or draw him on by insidious questions to talk of himself, his hopes

and prospects. But such golden occasions were rare, for the young doctor's life was a busy one.

Charlotte's sitting-room was furnished with the pick of the chattels which she had brought with her from her old home; and if not exactly an elegant apartment, it was certainly wanting neither in comfort nor good taste. The two windows were shaded by green Venetian blinds, which were always kept lowered till evening, so that even on the brightest day in summer a cool twilight pervaded the room. The walls, too, were painted of a delicate green, and the carpet followed suit, for green was the colour most grateful to Charlotte's darkened but still sensitive eyes. On the walls hung several old-fashioned but good engravings, of which every line was traced on Charlotte's memory; they had been familiar to her from the day she could first remember anything. On the table was a freshly-cut bouquet. In one corner were placed several shelves, on which stood about fifty volumes, and near them was a shaded reading-lamp; in another corner stood a magnificent harp.

It was to this room that Charlotte Herne came on the morning of her birthday, as soon as Dr. Randolph had set out on his forenoon rounds.

Having closed the door behind her, she drew from her bosom the locket which her cousin had given her, and pressed it passionately to her lips at least a dozen times. Then she laid it against her cheek and against her heart, and caressed it as though it were a sentient thing.

"You pretty little darling!" she said; "I will wear you always for his sake. Yes, even in my coffin you shall still rest on my heart. Oh, Hugh, how I love you!" she went on, still speaking aloud, as she had a habit of doing when alone in her own room; "but how much do you care for me, I wonder? You love me as you might love a sister, and no more. It is something—much—to know that your heart is vacant, and that your days of mourning for the flown bird which you once cherished there so fondly are over at last. Will any other bird, I wonder, ever tenant the empty cage? Not you, my poor blind Charlotte; not you, my girl! Don't you cherish such a foolish dream! There is a tiny fiend whispering something in my ear. Speak up, little devil, and let me hear what you have to say. 'Hope, and be patient!' Oh yes, we know all about that, don't we, Charlotte? But then it's such weary, weary work!"

She ended with a burst of shrill, metallic laughter, such as she rarely ventured upon, except when alone; and having again kissed the locket, she replaced it in the bosom of her dress.

"And now for an hour or two at my elegant uselessness," resumed Charlotte, as she took from her workbasket a half-finished antimacassar. "Two more days will see this finished, and one more will be added to the heap I have already done. In another year or two

I shall have thoroughly stocked all my friends and acquaintances with these proofs of my industry and goodwill. After that, I suppose I must take to working for the charity-bazaars. If some of my smiling lady-friends, who profess to take such a deep interest in poor blind me, only knew what black, viperous thoughts were battling in my heart while my fingers were busy in their behoof, would they care, I wonder, to decorate their drawing-rooms with my handiwork? Big and little, I work over twenty of these pretty trifles a year. Twenty a year for thirty years comes to just six hundred—a woman's life to be spent in the manufacture of six hundred antimacassars! Ah! but there's one comforting thought: I sha'n't live thirty years, nor twenty, nor ten, nor five. Just now the flame burns strong and steady, but one day there will come a sudden puff, and in a moment all will be dark. Such is the presage of Charlotte Herne."

For a quarter of an hour after this, Charlotte's crochet-needle moved in swift silence, while her mind seemed intent on counting her stitches. Then a pause, for her thoughts were too restless and busy to allow her to work without frequent breaks.

"Yes, but a very little while," she said, "and people will speak of me in the past tense; if, indeed, they ever speak of me at all. How few they are who will miss me! none who will mourn for me. I fancy I hear little Miss Medway discoursing over her tea-table to some spinster as ancient as herself. 'That article,' she will say, 'was worked by Charlotte Herne, and I set some store by it for her sake. She was blind, you know, and died young, poor thing! and it was almost a mercy she was taken at such an early age.' That is the way people in health always talk of us afflicted ones, whether we be lame, or blind, or dumb, or in whatever way we may differ from happier mortals. As if they knew! As if life had not its moments of sweetness to the veriest wretch that crawls! Then there's Hugh! How will he think of me after I shall be gone? I cannot tell—I cannot tell! I only know that if he loved me, were it ever such a wee morsel, I should want to live a thousand years."

A dark frown rested on her child-like face as she spoke thus. Tearing away her mind with a wrench, as it were, from the gloomy thoughts over which she had been brooding, she set resolutely to work again, counting stitch after stitch, for nearly half an hour. The task on which she was engaged had evidently a soothing effect upon her mind. The hard, set look faded slowly from her face, giving place to an expression of almost infantine gaiety. Suddenly she started up and flung her work across the floor.

"Not another stitch will I do this day!" she exclaimed. "Is it not my birthday? And is not Hugh going to drive me to Hill Nook Farm? And for one, two, three happy hours I shall have him all to myself!"

She crossed the room and sat down by her harp, and let her fingers wander caressingly over the strings.

"Come, old friend," she said, "your sweet voice shall talk to me awhile."

This was Charlotte's one accomplishment, but one that she rarely practised, except when alone. She had a sort of shy jealousy of playing before others, as though by so doing she were afraid of vulgarizing, and rendering common in her own eyes, this the most refined and cherished solace of her lonely hours. She played and sang none but sacred music—pieces which her mother had taught her, and which she had played and sung over and over again when a happy child at home. And it was strange to notice with what rapt fervour this girl, who seemed to have so little of reverence or of religious aspiration in her composition, would chant the words of the grand old Psalmist; or what tenderness she would infuse into her singing of the simple hymns, which, years ago, she had been used to hear sung by the congregation of the little out-of-the-way conventicle which she attended with her mother.

Charlotte's voice was a deep contralto, of narrow compass, almost masculine in some of its lower notes, but with a rich, liquid sweetness higher in the scale; such music, taking it all in all, as you would never have imagined the delicate little creature before you capable of producing.

After preluding awhile on the harp, as if to gather inspiration, Charlotte began to chant the Twenty-third Psalm in a low, rich voice, that grew in strength and volume as she went on. When she had come to the end of it, she let her head droop forward on to the instrument, and began to speak, almost in a whisper.

"How the old days come back to me when I sit down to play," she murmured; "the old, happy days before I was blind! Just now, when I was singing, I seemed to hear my mother's voice joining in now and again, as she went about her work in the kitchen. I heard my father's footsteps as he came up the little paved pathway to the back-door. My canary was fluttering in its cage; my kitten was basking on the window-sill; and through the open casement came the scent of new-mown hay. All conjured up by a few bars of familiar music! O mother, mother! why did you not take me with you? Why did you leave me here to fight this hard battle alone?—alone, and in a darkness that has no hope of dawn on earth. Are you, can you be happy in that heaven to which you are gone, without your child, without your one pet lamb, as you used to call me? What a mystery it is! Some day, perhaps, it will all be made clear."

She was roused from her reverie by the sound of the clock striking two. She was back among sublunary things in a moment.

"Only an hour, and Hugh will be here!" she exclaimed. "Which dress must I put on? My sprigged muslin would be most suitable for the day, and yet——"

And with her finger on her lips, and her mind intent on the knotty

question of what to wear, Charlotte went downstairs to look after some luncheon.

An hour later, Charlotte, seated by the side of Hugh, was being borne swiftly through the narrow streets of Helsingham, on her way to Hill Nook Farm. A few minutes sufficed to see them clear of the town and its suburbs, with the fresh country breeze blowing about them, and mitigating, to some extent, the severity of the June sunshine.

The drive was delightful, and all too soon they found themselves at the Farm, where a cordial welcome awaited them. It was an old-fashioned, white house, set in a perfect nest of greenery, with garden and orchard and far-stretching pasture lands; and was sheltered at the back by a great lichen-covered cliff, among the crannies of which a whole colony of birds had built their nests, in utter defiance of all the marauding boys of the neighbourhood. All these things were duly pictured by Hugh for Charlotte's behoof. Mrs. Chorlton would fain have installed her guests in the best parlour, an apartment never made use of except on occasions of high state and ceremony; but Hugh would not hear of it, and vowed that he would never come again if they made such a stranger of him. So, while he and Mr. Chorlton went to inspect the farm and the live-stock, Charlotte, under charge of her hostess, was installed in a huge easy-chair, between the fire and the window, in the family room, an apartment with sanded floor and whitewashed walls, and a ceiling from which depended several huge hams swathed in paper. A wonderfully home-like room, especially in winter time, when the immense fireplace, at which a whole ox might have been comfortably roasted, was filled with dry logs, that blazed and crackled and shone warm and ruddy through the diamond-paned window—never curtained in those primitive parts—for half a mile or more adown the dark valley.

Mrs. Chorlton chatted with Charlotte in a kind, motherly way, while busying herself with the preparation of certain delicate tea-cakes, for the manufacture of which she was justly famed. Then the gentlemen came in, and tea, that most sociable of meals, was duly discussed, with the assistance of some delicious Hill Nook cream and fresh home-made butter. After tea, the heat of the day being somewhat tempered by this time, they all voted for the garden; and there, in an arbour trellised with honeysuckle and sweetbriar, Charlotte feasted on strawberries, sugar and cream, as promised her by Hugh; while our young doctor and his host paced the rose-scented alleys, smoking their cigars, and settling the difficulties of the nation to their own satisfaction.

Not the least enjoyable part of the day's proceedings was the ride home through the balmy twilight; but they parted at the door, not to meet again till next day. Dr. Randolph had been sent for in haste an hour ago, and could not now afford to delay another minute. Charlotte walked upstairs to her own room in a dreamy

mood, carrying her bonnet by its strings. Just then she felt supremely happy. So ended her birthday—a day to be looked back to, in the dark time that was slowly but surely coming upon her, as to something that could never be repeated.

CHAPTER III.

AT IRONGATE HOUSE.

On the morning of this same nineteenth of June on which we have made the acquaintance of Dr. Randolph and Miss Charlotte Herne, that eminent scholastic establishment for young ladies, known as Irongate House, was in a state of uproar and confusion that would have amply justified any member of the Lunacy Board who might have stepped in by accident, and been ignorant as to the cause of it, in issuing immediate instructions for a commission to sit and inquire into the state of mind of Miss Easterbrook and the whole of her boarders.

But scarcely could anyone not a stranger have crossed the threshold before he would have had shouted and dinned into his ears, by a charivari of shrill youthful voices, the tremendous fact that this was breaking-up day for the Midsummer holidays. Adieu for six long weeks to themes, exercises, tasks and compositions of every kind; to Mademoiselle Perrin's irregular verbs; to Miss Davenant's terrible compositions on English history; and to Madam Easterbrook's system of rising with the lark, which young ladies of an indolent habit voted a terrible nuisance, and vowed they would make up for it by lying in bed till noon as soon as ever they should reach home.

Yes, that was the magic word—home! which this morning filled each of those youthful hearts with a whisper of gladness. Therefore for a few brief hours was Irongate House like a nest of happy singing-birds; therefore to-day was discipline flung to the winds, and authority trampled under foot, and all petty jealousies, and school-girl animosities forgotten in the common joy.

Even portly Miss Easterbrook herself—there is no denying the fact—is infected with the general contagion of gladness, and seems to fancy that her own school-days have come back again. She is actually wandering from room to room in the old mansion in a morning wrapper—a state of things never witnessed by the oldest boarder, except on occasions like the present—looking after the packing of the young ladies' trunks, and seeing that everything is in readiness for their departure; having some absurd question or outrageous conundrum for each room that she goes into; and marking her progress with lavish showers of delicious bonbons, done up in little packets with French mottoes outside.

Irongate House, formerly the home of the Derewcods, one of the

oldest county families, now Miss Easterbrook's establishment for young ladies, stood on a pleasant, healthy elevation in the pleasantest suburb of Helsingham.

Although it would have been considered as a very inconvenient residence by any family accustomed to the space and airiness of a large modern house, yet Miss Easterbrook found it admirably adapted for scholastic purposes. All those queer little rooms on the second floor, with the casements and the diamond-paned windows, into which you were liable to stumble head first if you happened to forget the two steps leading into each of them from the corridor, served admirably as dormitories; then, for a general class-room, what could be better than that large and noble dining-room, panelled with black oak, although, to be sure, the ceiling was somewhat lower than accorded with modern ideas on the subject? and nobody could deny that the old library made a capital refectory. Then there was space enough for special class-rooms, whenever such were needed; and Miss Easterbrook was still able to have separate apartments of her own, shut out from the rest of the house.

As for the house itself, it was built of red brick, with stone mullions and copings, and a funeral-looking urn by way of ornament at each corner of the roof. It stood in its own grounds, which, although of small extent, were laid out in a pleasant, old-fashioned style, and shut in on three sides by a high brick wall—a further advantage where there were so many giddy fledglings to be kept from harm. On the fourth side stood a pair of large iron gates, of elaborate workmanship, with a stretch of high railing on either hand, between which and the house grew several clumps of immense evergreens, so thick and so high as effectually to preclude all impertinent prying from the neighbouring road into precincts rendered sacred to the uses of the dread Minerva.

Miss Easterbrook was far from being what, in these days, would be called a highly-educated woman, and no one knew her deficiencies in this respect better than she did. To do her justice, she never represented herself to the parents and friends of her pupils as anything more than a motherly ignoramus, who would do her best to look carefully after the health, the morals and the deportment of the young ladies committed to her charge, leaving them to be brought forward by the efficient teachers whom she engaged, in whatever branches of education might be deemed advisable. It was universally agreed that Miss Easterbrook's terms were very high, and yet her school was the most popular of any in Helsingham or its neighbourhood; and it at once gave a girl a sort of standing, when she was brought out in the circles of the little town, to say of her that she had been "finished" at Irongate House.

By three o'clock the boarders had all gone, some one way, and some another, and an unwonted stillness reigned through the grim old mansion.

Miss Easterbrook, having witnessed the last departure, hastened

off with a sigh of relief to her own room, there to try on the three new dresses which Miss Sharp, the milliner, had just sent up, and to look after the packing of her trunks; for she herself was to start by the five p.m. train for London, on her way to Hastings, at which place of fashionable resort she generally spent the summer vacation.

We all know that not to mortals is it given to be entirely happy, and Jane Easterbrook was no exception to the rule. Putting aside the petty annoyances incident to her profession, which, indeed, never made much impression on her, Miss Easterbrook may be said to have had only one great trouble, but it was one that had lain heavily on her mind for years, and against which she had bravely but ineffectually struggled.

The name of the demon by which she was tormented was Corpulence.

In other words, Miss Easterbrook was getting fatter year by year; and, as she herself said, there was no knowing when this state of things would cease, or how soon her waist might disappear entirely; so that latterly she had grown quite morbid—that is to say, as morbid as a person of her jolly temperament could possibly become—through much brooding over this painful subject. Day and night it dwelt in her thoughts; it haunted her dreams; it affected her appetite; it lent an acidity to her temper foreign to her normal good-nature; and yet with all this, she seemed to become stouter as the summer advanced, and this bright June afternoon she was sitting, red in the face, panting for breath, and feeling half suffocated, in one of her new dresses, into which, after many efforts, Louisa, her maid, had succeeded in inducting her.

"I never can bear to wear it, of that I'm certain!" said Miss Easterbrook, speaking in a slightly sepulchral voice, as she wiped the perspiration from her forehead.

"Oh, yes, you will, ma'am," replied the confident Louisa. "You see it's different with you this afternoon. You've been on your feet all this hot day, worriting yourself with looking after the young ladies, and have put yourself out of the way a little; all of which makes the veins swell and one's things fit tight. If you had only tried on this dress first thing after breakfast, ma'am, when you was cool and comfortable, you would have found it a beautiful fit."

"There may be some truth in what you say, Louisa; especially as Miss Sharp states in her note that she is sure I shall find the dresses easy and comfortable."

"Oh yes, ma'am, it's as I say, you may depend on it; and you know yourself, that you've only gained two pounds in weight during the last four weeks."

"And quite enough too, Louisa, when you consider how heavy I was before. I did intend to travel in this dress, but that's quite hopeless now. I'm afraid you will have to let it out a little when we get to Hastings."

"I hope not, ma'am. You will find the sea-air and the bathing very bracing. If anything, your dresses will get too large."

"You forget, Louisa, that the sea-breeze always gives me such a terrible appetite, so that one benefit counteracts the other. However, get this dress off me as quickly as possible, or I shall be serving it the same as I did that blue silk at the picnic last autumn, when all the hooks-and-eyes gave way with a little plop, one after another, from the waist right up to the shoulders, and me sitting there with nothing over my dress but an open-work black-lace shawl, that showed the figure through quite plainly."

"I suppose I must pack up the three dresses as they are, ma'am?" said Louisa.

"Yes, certainly; perhaps they may not feel quite so tight next time I put them on; in any case, there is no time to have them altered before we go. Stay a moment, though; I think I will try on that shot silk again, and just step downstairs and ask Miss Davenant how she likes it. No one can deny that Miss Davenant has excellent taste in dress."

Louisa turned up her nose, and sniffed a little at the idea of Miss Davenant's opinion being of consequence to anybody.

"Get your own trunk completed, and the direction cards made out, while I go down to Miss Davenant; and tell Mrs. Greene to have a cup of tea ready in a quarter of an hour."

Miss Easterbrook paused for a moment at the top of the stairs, while a pleasant smile stole over her ample, good-natured face.

"I know that it's very foolish of me," she murmured to herself, "but I cannot help wondering whether that Major Styles will be at Hastings this season. His attentions last year were certainly very marked, although his words might be considered somewhat ambiguous. I am afraid he is very poor, and that he has little to live on besides his half-pay—but that need not matter much; and I am nearly certain that his hair and whiskers are dyed. Well, well, we shall see. But Jane Easterbrook will never throw herself away on a spendthrift or a *roué*."

She went downstairs slowly and thoughtfully, and then along a corridor leading towards the back of the house, out of which several doors opened into different rooms. She knocked at one of these doors, and on a pleasant voice saying "Come in," she entered, and Miss Davenant turned with a smile to greet her.

CHAPTER IV.

MISS DAVENANT.

"I HAVE come to bid you good-bye, my dear, and to ask you how you like my new dress," said Miss Easterbrook as she advanced into the room.

Miss Davenant was busily engaged on the half-yearly accounts, which would follow the young ladies to their homes in the course of a post or two, and would cause sundry grave papas to elevate their eyebrows, and growl out something about "girls being such an awful expense," She laid down her pen, and contemplated her visitor for a moment or two before speaking.

"I like your dress very much," she said at last; "both style and material suit you exactly. I hope that you will enjoy yourself while you are away. At what hour do you start?"

"The train leaves at five, so that I have no time to spare. I am glad you like the dress. Do put away that ledger for this afternoon. I never can bear to see anybody at work on breaking-up day. Remember, I leave you absolute mistress of Irongate House and all there is in it till I come back. I do hope you will take care of your health while I am away, and contrive to get a bit of colour into those pale cheeks of yours; although, mind you, I would give a hundred pounds this minute to be as thin as you are. I went up to Dora Morrison's room about half an hour ago, and I quite agree with Dr. Randolph that the child is coming on nicely. Meanwhile, I leave her with every confidence in your hands. And now good-bye, dear; good-bye, and God bless you!"

And, with a fervent kiss on each cheek, and a cordial grasp of the hand, the good-natured Miss Easterbrook took her departure.

Left alone, Miss Davenant finished the account on which she was at work at the moment of Miss Easterbrook's entrance; then closing the fat little ledger, she drew an easy-chair in front of the open French window, and sat down, with an air at once weary and despondent. On a table close to her elbow lay the current number of the "Revue des Deux Mondes;" a volume of Spanish exercises, which language Miss Davenant had lately begun to study; Schiller's "Gedichte," and the third volume of the newest novel procurable at the Helsingham circulating library.

Other evidences of Miss Davenant's tastes were visible in various articles of her own property scattered about the room.

Over the fireplace hung a proof engraving of the Cambridge portrait of Tennyson, flanked on each side by an original sketch by Stothard, which, together with the bronze timepiece of classical design, but irregular habits, had been picked up by Miss Davenant among the London curiosity shops. The timepiece was supported by a couple of vases, genuine antiques, which had been dug up at Herculaneum—articles that Miss Davenant set great store by. Her property, too, was the rather shabby-looking piano in the corner, which had yet a voice of sweetness all its own, that its mistress's touch could evoke at will; and the marble bust of Dante which fitly crowned the little bookcase, and which had come to her, a present, from Florence itself.

In the middle of the table there stood, this afternoon, a shallow

vase nearly filled with tiny bouquets of freshly-gathered flowers, which had been left by home-going pupils, as tokens of affectionate regard when they came in to bid Miss Davenant good-bye. There were other tokens near at hand of the same kindly feeling—in the collar and pair of cuffs, elaborately embroidered by the skilful fingers of Miss Augusta Darrell; in an ivory and silver penholder; in a book-marker cunningly worked; and in an illuminated Latin prayer, done by clever little Miss Browne.

A pleased expression came over the face of Miss Davenant as her eyes wandered over these tokens of goodwill which had come direct from the hearts of their youthful givers.

"They like me," she murmured to herself, as she took up one of the bouquets and smelt at it; "they like me, for all I set them such difficult tasks to learn; and I am glad of it."

A woman tall and slender—thin, some people would have called her—and thirty-five years old, was this Margaret Davenant, with whom we shall have so much to do in the following pages. Her features were finely cut, and of a regularity almost classical; but the cheeks were more sunken than they should have been at her age, and there were dark circles under her eyes, and a pinched expression about the thin, mobile lips, which told a tale of secret cares preying on a nervous, highly-strung organization, wearing it away by slow attrition, endured year after year with a restrained patience that never found a voice except in darkness and solitude.

The long black hair was brushed back from the forehead, and fastened with a comb in a great bunch at the back of her head. The black eyebrows were thick and almost straight, becoming straighter whenever the large black eyes below them flashed with anger or defiance, and more arched whenever the face over which they dominated was lighted up with one of Margaret's rare smiles. Her hands were long, tapering, and diaphanous, and she had a trick of rubbing them slowly one within the other whenever she sat thinking intently, or of turning round and round the worn turquoise ring which no one ever remembered to have seen her without. She was dressed in thick black silk, her customary wear; and round her neck was a slender gold chain, from which hung a tiny watch, hid away in some mysterious pocket among the folds of her dress. Whether Margaret Davenant sat or stood, there was about her that indefinable air of grace and distinction which is one of Nature's rarest gifts to man or woman.

The patch of sunlight in the garden broadens slowly as the afternoon advances, creeping over grass-plot and flower-bed, brightening the clumps of evergreens one by one, and stealing imperceptibly up to the threshold of the open window, and so into the room where Margaret Davenant sits musing in melancholy mood.

As she sits there, with her chin resting in the hollow of one hand, she seems to be gazing earnestly into the garden, but her eyes, wide

open though they are, note no feature of the peaceful scene; her mind is busy with far other pictures, and she is dead for the time being to all outward impressions. How quiet the house is this afternoon, now that all its chattering occupants have taken flight!—a stillness that seems almost holy from its very rarity broods over the old place. Now and then a distant door is heard to shut; and at intervals the faint tones of a female voice singing some pensive strain steal into the room: it is the voice of Esther Sarel, who is singing one of the many hymns she knows, as she goes sedately about her work.

Margaret is more dull and melancholy than usual to-day. All these farewells and departures for happy homes have affected her spirits, she hardly knows why. A sense of desertion is upon her; for her no home will open wide its doors, no dear ones bid her welcome. But this is an old feeling, and one with which she has been familiar for years. To-day it shall not get the mastery of her, and she crushes it back, low down into her heart, and will have none of it. To-day, if ever, she ought to be happy, for has she not six weeks of freedom before her—six long, pleasant weeks to call her own? But they will soon come to an end, and then her slavery will re-commence; and so, from year to year, she must pace the same weary round without hope of change, till she fades into an old woman and the end comes. But this thought, likewise, she soon puts impatiently on one side; it is a demon whose face she has seen before, and she tramples it under-foot without remorse. Ridiculous at this time of day to cry out that the yoke is heavy, and that the harness chafes. She has borne them through the freshness of morning and through the noontide heats, and now, when the shadows begin to lengthen and the evening no longer seems far off, shall she lift up her voice and acknowledge that her burden is greater than she can bear? Were it not wiser, and better in every way, to toil cheerfully onward till night should come, bringing with it rest and inmost peace for such as have laboured faithfully to the end?

More than an hour has passed while she has been sitting thus, with fixed, brooding eyes that gaze out from under their straight black brows without seeing anything of what is before them. But she breaks up her musings at last, not without an effort, and turning to her desk, takes pen and paper in hand. "I will write to Adela," she says to herself, "and tell her something of what weighs so heavily on my mind. It will do me good to confide to another—and that other my oldest friend—the secret care that gnaws me as the fox did the Spartan lad. They say that half the sting is taken out of a trouble when it is told; but that depends, I suppose, on the kind of person to whom one tells it."

Dipping her pen in the inkstand, Miss Davenant wrote as under:—

"My dear Adela,—I believe that, according to promise, I should

have written to you by the mail a fortnight ago; and that, consequently, I ought now to begin my letter in the orthodox fashion, by enumerating a long string of excuses for my seeming neglect. But I am not going to do anything of the kind. I did not write you at the time agreed upon because I did not; which, as I take it, is a good and sufficient reason for any woman to give. I might add that, at the time I promised to write, I was suffering from one of my old fits of nervous irritability; and you remember what they are. Sometimes, at such seasons, I believe that if I had the power I should stop the world from ever again turning on its axis, and never let there be another sunrise. Oh! the torture, when I am thus mentally at war with myself and every one, of being obliged to listen to the lessons, and correct the exercises, of a pack of stupid girls, whose intellects, as far as anything useful is concerned, are, five times out of six, of the most meagre and sterile kind!

"And now that I have thus handsomely made my excuses, I may be permitted to congratulate you on your brightening prospects; and that I do so most gladly and sincerely you will not doubt. After your many trials, you seem at last to have found a home, such as, years ago, we, in our girlish inexperience, used fondly to imagine were plentiful as blackberries. But you are one of that happy class with whom a little kindness goes a great way. In your place, I am afraid that I should turn cold and hard, and make myself thoroughly disagreeable, and fancy, foolishly enough, no doubt, that I was being patronized, and set up my quills accordingly. Depend upon it, Adela, it is a happy faculty, that of being able always to look at the sunny side of the apple; and that is just what you have done through life.

"How I should like to make the acquaintance of your Yankee Crighton and his charming family! To hear of an American merchant as being liberal, educated, and a thorough gentleman, has for me an element of novelty; but I am quite willing to believe that my mental portrait of the character was incorrect and out of drawing, and have, consequently, deposed it to make room for your pen-and-ink sketch of Mr. Leffler. How little this Mr. Leffler, or his wife, or the young ladies his daughters, imagine what a shrewd, but kindly observer of themselves and their doings they have under their roof, in the person of that quiet, demure, spectacled, oldish young person, known as Mademoiselle Adela Reichenbaum, who has engaged, in consideration of a certain number of dollars per annum, to put certain artistic finishing touches to the education of the aforesaid young ladies—delicate strokes, which the exigencies of real life will, in all probability, rub out utterly before they are half-a-dozen years older! But by that time the grand object of all this ornamentation and superficial veneer-work will have been caught and secured. What that object is, you know as well as I.

"I have just styled you an 'oldish young person,' and I hasten to

condone the offence, if such it be, by expressing my readiness to put myself in the same category. Yes, your Margaret is five-and-thirty years old. Alas and alack-a-day! Not infrequently of a morning do I find a white hair among my ebon locks; but I pluck up the noxious intruders as soon as seen, and strive to cajole myself with the idea that I still feel as young at heart as I did the day I was twenty.

"Of all that youthful sisterhood—how many of us were there?—ten or a dozen at the least—who, on a certain idle afternoon (you remember well the day), sitting together in an arbour in the garden of the Pension Blisset, and discoursing of many things, registered among themselves a mild vow of perpetual spinsterhood, but you and I, my Adela, have remained true to the obligation. Of that gay, laughing band, three or four, alas! are dead; while all the others, with the two honourable exceptions already named, have taken upon themselves the yoke of slaves, and are married. It is just possible that a censorious world might hint that it is not our fault that we have not fallen into the same predicament. But you and I, *carissima*, know better than that. It is rather that we have refused to listen to the voice of the charmer, and have chosen instead to sit at the feet of the divine Pallas, and to slake our thirst at her ever-springing fountain, and to serve her humbly as handmaidens so long as heart and brain will work together.

"This is breaking-up day at Irongate House, and I have six long, delicious weeks of lazyhood before me. The pupils are all gone, except one little invalid, whom I am going to see presently; Miss Easterbrook herself is on her way to Hastings; and I and the servants have the grim old house all to ourselves. Why have I not followed their example and taken flight, you will probably ask. That is just what I am about to explain to you.

"Did I ever tell you the story of my life? I think not, for there are certain passages in it that I could not bear to speak about to any one. Long as you have known Margaret Davenant, and 'tis fifteen years now since first we met, you have only known her as one who, like yourself, was compelled to earn her bread by imparting to others such scraps of knowledge as she herself, painfully and with much labour, had acquired. The most eventful chapter of my life-history had been spelt through, and burnt into my memory, before you and I met. Let me try to sketch it for you in outline.

"I was not always destined for a governess; I was born to better things; and up to the age of eighteen my life was one sunny round of gaiety and enjoyment. Brought up in a luxurious home a few miles out of London; irregularly educated by a series of governesses who were distinctly given to understand that they must make the path of learning one of flowers also; the pet of an ailing, beautiful mother, with whom I used to take delightful drives in the parks or along the leafy country roads, and to whom I used to read poetry in the

summer twilight; the spoiled darling of an ever-smiling, elegantly dressed father, in whose ear I had only to whisper any request, however absurd, to have it immediately gratified, and who represented, in my eyes, that never-failing fountain of wealth of which, when a child, I had read in fairy tales: no wonder that to the Margaret Davenant of those days this world seemed a very charming place. When I was in my seventeenth year, Love came to crown the bright picture, in the person of a handsome, dark-eyed captain of dragoons. Ah, the happy days of that bright summer, how swiftly they speed away! Had I ever looked forward at that time—which I did not, finding the present quite as much as I could deal with—I should certainly have inwoven with my dreams of the life before me the golden thread of a happy future. My future had been bright and unclouded ever since I could remember; why should it not continue to be so through all the sweet seasons yet to come? I had always been flattered and spoiled and beloved by those around me; why should I not be so for ever?

"My first real sorrow—and a big one it seemed at the time, although dwarfed into a trifle by after events—was my parting from my soldier-sweetheart, who was ordered with his regiment to India. It was agreed that, at the end of two years, he should sell out and return to England, and claim his bride. But at my age two years seemed a terribly long time. He had been gone but a few months when I lost my mother, who had been an invalid for years—a mother all the more fondly cherished, perhaps, in that she had of late yielded more and more to her daughter's loving tyranny, not having, indeed, sufficient strength left to oppose to the resolute will and undisciplined temper of that black-browed young person. Perhaps it was well that my poor darling went to her rest before the dark cloud, which was slowly accumulating its forces, burst over the heads of all whom she held dear on earth. When the evil day came, and it was not long in coming, I wept no more for my mother.

"Blow the third fell a month or two later. Papa, who had always been fond of horse-racing, became involved in difficulties; in brief, for I cannot bear even now to write about that time, he was ruined, and obliged to go abroad. Everything we had was sold to satisfy our creditors; and the day I was eighteen I found myself in a mean London lodging, with twenty pounds in my pocket, the produce of the sale of some of my mother's trinkets, and with a little sister three years old, who was dependent on me for everything. You have often heard me speak of my sweet Trix, though you have never seen her; henceforth I was to be to her as mother and sister in one. Two years later you and I met for the first time, at the Pension Blisset; and from that day the details of my life are known to you.

"You and I, my Adela, have both tasted of the bitter cup of poverty; and I think that through all these years we have been drawn to each other not merely by a similarity of intellectual tastes,

but also by certain points of resemblance in our fortunes. We have both had to fight the world single-handed, with no one to fall back upon in case of defeat. We have each of us had a helpless loved one to struggle for as well as for ourselves: you an infirm mother; I, a young sister; and, thank Heaven! neither of us has been utterly defeated.

"But all this time my darling Trix has been growing towards womanhood, and a few days hence she comes to me, her education completed, ready to take her place in the world. But what is that place to be? That is the question which I ponder daily and nightly, but without being able to answer it to my own satisfaction. Trix has been educated carefully and well, on that point no expense has been spared; and most young persons similarly circumstanced would fall naturally into the ordinary ruck of teachers or governesses, and so work out by degrees a humble position for themselves. But that is precisely the fate from which I am desirous of rescuing my sister. My own experiences as a governess have not been altogether happy ones; and I am naturally anxious to shield Beatrice from any similar trials. Besides which, there is a radical difference in our dispositions, as no one knows better than myself. Trix has but little of that strong fixity of purpose and pig-headed obstinacy of will for which her elder sister is noted. In most of her qualities, both of head and heart, she is her mother over again: a nature joyous, volatile and impressionable; easily moved to laughter, not difficult to melt to tears; hardly formed to tread the thorny path of life alone; needing the help of a strong heart and a wise head to preserve it at that uniform level of modulated feeling which society inexorably demands, even from those who touch but the hem of its garment. There is all the bright joyousness of a healthy, happy child about her, and almost as great an ignorance of the world—at least, of that busy, struggling, dusty world which has to fight for its daily crust in ten thousand different ways. To all this join the fact that Beatrice is very good-looking, and it will at once be admitted that I have cause for much anxious thought. I shudder at the idea of sending her out as a governess into the great world of London, with its innumerable temptations, many of them precisely such as are calculated to ensnare the fancy and delude the imagination of a girl so impressionable and inexperienced as Beatrice. On the other hand, supposing it were decided that she should not become a governess in a private family, but one opening would remain for her, and that would be to become a humble and ill-paid directress of feminine studies in Irongate House or some similar establishment. But what a fate for my sweet Trix, one of Nature's darlings, who seems fitted only for sunshine and felicity, to fade into the weary drudge of a dull schoolroom! And yet, from what I can see at present, it seems imperatively necessary that one or the other of these modes of earning a living should be adopted by her, and at no very distant date either.

"Sometimes, in my many musings about my sister's future, the thought has crossed my mind that Trix might perhaps win a wealthy husband for herself, and so exorcise this nightmare of drudgery and indigence. But it is a dangerous theme on which to muse, conducive to day-dreams without end, if I would only allow myself to give way to such pleasant imaginings; and I have seen enough of the world to know that portionless girls, however charming they may be, rarely find rich suitors, unless, indeed, they can go out properly chaperoned into the great world of London, and allow a marketable value to be set upon themselves. But, as you know, I am possessed of no interest sufficient to effect for Trix an introduction into good society; and what chance would she have among the humdrum circles o Helsingham of marrying any one better than a retired cheesemonger, or a fortunate linendraper?—good, worthy people, no doubt, but no match for a Davenant, however poor she might be. On the whole, as I cannot help confessing, the marriage scheme does not look very promising at present; so Beatrice must come while the question of her future still remains undecided.

"And now you know why I am still roosting under the eaves of the old house, instead of having taken wing for some seaside haunt or sunny northern glen. I feel that it has done me good thus to open my mind to you; but I want your advice; I need the aid of your calm, clear sense; so be a good girl, and write me a long letter as soon as possible. It was my intention to have given you some account of what I have been reading of late, but this letter is already spun out to such an unconscionable length, that I hasten at once to conclude. My poor little patient upstairs will think that I have quite forgotten her. So not another word, except that I remain as ever,

"Your affectionate friend,

"MARGARET DAVENANT.

"P.S.—I need hardly tell you that my handsome captain had quite forgotten my existence when he came back from India at the end of a couple of years."

CHAPTER V.

SEEN THROUGH THE LAURELS.

"A PLEASANT picture!" said Dr. Randolph to himself, as he was shown next morning into Miss Davenant's room, and paused for an instant on the threshold to note the features of the scene before him.

The room was perfumed by a freshly-gathered bouquet; the piano, and its accompanying music-book, both stood open; one of the two tables was littered with books and reviews; at the other sat Margaret, busily engaged on a pencil sketch. Scattered about this second table were a number of studies in crayon and pencil, with here and there a photograph, some large, some small, some representing bits of Con-

tinental life or scenery, while others were the likenesses of absent friends.

Margaret's face lit up with one of her rare smiles as she held out her hand to the young surgeon, who was attending temporarily at Irongate House during the illness of that aged and highly respectable practitioner, Dr. Bagshaw.

"I hope that my little patient is still improving," said Dr. Randolph, when the usual greetings were over.

"I am happy to think that she is," said Margaret, as she rang the bell. "Mrs. Greene will go upstairs with you, and I shall be glad to see you when you come down, if you have a few minutes to spare."

In less than five minutes the Doctor was downstairs again, and seated near the table where Margaret was still at work on her sketch. Having satisfied Miss Davenant that the young lady upstairs was progressing favourably, he began to turn over and examine the sketches on the table, first asking and obtaining permission to do so.

"I have seen you at this sort of work once or twice before," said Hugh, as he turned over the sketches one after another. "Are you fond of drawing?"

"I don't call it work, but play," said Margaret with a smile. "Yes, I am fond of drawing; it serves, now and again, to while away a leisure hour pleasantly, more especially during vacation time; for it is only when I have grown tired of reading that I care to exercise my pencil, and that does not often happen, except at such times as the present. Do any of your tastes lie in the same direction?"

"I flatter myself by thinking that they do, although my technical knowledge of art is very limited. If I were asked to explain critically why I liked a good painting or a good drawing, I should probably find myself at a loss for the proper terms; and if hard pressed, I could only say that it pleased my eye, and through my eye, I suppose, that inner sense of the beautiful which we all possess in a greater or lesser degree. What a charming head!" he added suddenly, as he took up one of the photographs. "And yet it seems familiar to me. I must have seen the original somewhere." He pondered for a moment or two, gazing earnestly at the portrait, while Margaret lay back in her chair, and watched him with an amused face.

"I have it! It is the likeness of your sister," he cried at length, with the air of one who has made a discovery.

"Yes, it is poor Trix's portrait," said Margaret. "Next time you come, you will probably find her here in person."

The Doctor's swarthy cheek flushed, and a sudden light came into his eyes as Margaret spoke. "Coming over on a visit, I presume?" he said. "Is Miss Beatrice going to make a long stay in Helsingham?"

"She will stay here altogether, so far as I know at present."

"But—but your sister is not (pardon my inquisitiveness) she cannot be coming to Irongate House merely as a teacher."

"Such is the mode she will probably adopt of earning a living."

"But, good heaven! you don't mean to say——," and then he broke off in some confusion. "Pardon me, Miss Davenant, it is no business of mine," he added; and then he replaced the portrait on the table, and sat very still for a minute or two, gazing out into the garden, but with eyes that saw nothing, unless it was some inward picture known to himself alone; while Margaret sat absently tapping the end of her pencil against her teeth, and watching him curiously from under her black eyebrows.

Hugh Randolph had met Beatrice Davenant in Paris, about a year before, on the occasion of his going there to place an orphan ward at school. On Margaret's recommendation, he had taken his ward to the school at which Trix was finishing her education, and had been introduced to that young lady by Margaret's wish, she being desirous of ascertaining, from a trustworthy eye-witness, that her sister was really as well and happy as, in her letters, she represented herself to be.

Dr. Randolph's reverie was broken by the striking of the little clock on the mantelpiece. He took up a book of travel that lay on the table, and began to speak of his own desire to go abroad; and how, ever since he was quite a boy, he had longed to visit Switzerland and Italy; how, at odd times, the wish to flee away into that vast strange world, of which he knew so little except from books, would even now come over him with almost irresistible force; and how faint the prospect seemed of a poor country surgeon, such as he was, ever being able to satisfy this craving of the mind. "I suppose it is a feeling that will wither up and die away in time," he said, "as so many other feelings do as we advance in life, till, at last, I shall come to think my own ingle nook the finest place in the world, and have no desire left to travel far beyond it. But you have seen the Alps, have you not, Miss Davenant?"

"Yes, I have seen the Alps several times," said Margaret. "Only please not to ask me what they are like. Indeed, if you do, I can only give you the same answer that old Mrs. Crace once gave me when I asked her what *she* thought of them, 'They are very nice, no doubt, for those who are fond of that sort of thing.'"

Dr. Randolph laughed, and then, discovering that it was time to go, he buttoned his coat, and took up his hat and gloves, but in a slow, lingering way very unusual with him.

"Let me find you a rosebud for your button-hole," said Margaret; and, taking a tiny pair of scissors, she stepped out through the French window into the garden. She dawdled about among the rose-bushes for a minute or two before she could find a bud to her mind, and so found herself behind the thick clump of laurels which fronted the window of her room. Some impulse, which she could not have defined to herself, induced her to part the leaves gently with one hand and peep through. She was just in time to see Dr. Randolph in the act of lifting her sister's portrait to his lips. Once—twice he

kissed it, and then he put it back on the table. Margaret's face darkened, and her black eyebrows came together ominously, as she gazed from her hiding-place: but her face was as unruffled as usual when she entered the room a minute later, and pinned the rose in Hugh's button-hole. Then the two shook hands, and the Doctor went on his way.

"Much as I like you, Hugh Randolph, and good a man as I believe you to be," said Margaret to herself as the door closed behind the young surgeon, "I don't intend to have any of your love-making here, sir. Beatrice Davenant must look higher than a poor country surgeon; or, if she has not wit enough to look after her own interests, I must do so for her. We have been labouring in the slough of poverty long enough; and she, at least, shall be lifted out of it, if a sister's hand and a sister's brain only prove strong enough to accomplish that end."

(To be continued.)

LIFE'S OPENING YEAR.

She stands—the little maid of three years old—
In morn's pure light,
Blue heavens above, white flowerets at her feet;
No shade of night
Crossing her path; no breath of winter frost,
No autumn gloom,
No heat of summer stealing near to blight
Spring's tender bloom.
Yet *must* they come. We know it, and we sigh,
Though each may bring
A richer blessing than the dainty gifts
Of early spring.

So sweet the blossom that we dread the change
From flower to fruit;
The budding boughs are glad with singing birds,
Red woods are mute:
Yet is the blossom but the promised store
Of future days,
Yet are the songs but earnest of new life
And fuller praise;
And vain the thought to check the march of time,
Or childhood's feet
Hasting to that far country where alone
Life is complete.

E. Rhodes.

IN THE LOTUS LAND.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "Through Holland," "The Bretons at Home," etc. etc.

Corsican Peasants.

DARKNESS had long fallen upon the earth when the heavily-laden train steamed into Marseilles. The orange groves, the flowering cactus, the olive-yards and vineyards, the villa-crowned slopes and the encircling hills that had so often delighted our vision, all had to be taken for granted. The wonderful sea, flashing in the sunshine, deep, dark blue in the shadows, was invisible.

But we were glad to reach the old town, under any conditions, no matter what the time. After a rapid journey of nearly thirty hours, the prospect of rest seemed all in all to us. At the station there was endless bustle and confusion. We had written for rooms at the Grand Hôtel du Louvre, and for some conveyance to meet us other than the lumbering omnibus which, at all times and in all places, is more or less of an infliction. We found our rooms perfection, but anything above and beyond the omnibus they chose to think superfluous. They had sent *two* omnibuses, and what more could be wanted by any reasonable mortal? Their omnibuses left nothing to be desired.

Whilst we were looking about and making enquiries, H. took a seat in one of them, calmly to await results. The immediate result was unexpected. Without warning or ceremony, apparently without rhyme or reason, the omnibus dashed off, and H. with it. This was a little alarming, for he was literally destitute of everything excepting

the clothes he stood up in. We could only hope that we had not parted for good.

I was left on the platform, battling it out with the other omnibus conductor, who, in a vile and almost unintelligible patois, insisted that it was too late to get the luggage that night—a sheer waste of time; they would fetch it early in the morning. This, of course, was preposterous. Though of the sterner sex, our baggage was as necessary to us, though perhaps not as precious, as the proverbial bonnet-box to the spindle side of creation. Finally we had our way, and we and the second omnibus rattled off: luggage and all.

On arriving at the hotel, it was a relief to find H. standing just outside the porte-cochère, still calmly awaiting events and the second omnibus. "Of course I knew we were not parted for ever," he laughed, in the quiet tones so necessary to good fellowship. "These awkward things never happen excepting to very funny people. All the same I was glad to see you rattle up, if only for the sake of supper."

My companion on this occasion was not the H. C., reader, whom you have met in Brittany and Majorca. The latter was in England, in attendance upon his aunt, Lady Maria, who had matrimonial designs in his favour, and, by a sort of domestic coup-d'état, meant to marry him to the great heiress, Miss Annabella de Courcy Flushington, whose fortune was confidently said to be not less than two millions. I may as well say at once that the social coup-d'état, like many a political one, proved a failure. Many weeks later, on returning from Egypt, we found H. C. in Lady Maria's blackest books. He had refused to propose to the great heiress because he considered her auburn hair distinctly red; and the latter, in a fit of pique, had engaged herself to a ritualistic curate with a receding forehead, a lisp, an incipient moustache, the whitest of hands, but absolutely no brains. The house in Park Lane was shut up. Lady Maria had gone off for three weeks to Gastein, to take the baths and recruit her shattered nerves; and H. C. was killing time at his Yorkshire shooting box. "It has been a blow to my aunt, but she is coming round," he wrote word as soon as he heard of our arrival. "I had a letter from her yesterday. She wants me to run over and fetch her, and I suppose I must do so by way of *amende honorable*. Gastein is not what it was, she declares. The mountains oppress her, and the noise of the waterfall drives her mad. As usual, she has the 'Bismarck rooms' at Straubinger's, and, as they literally overhang the roaring torrent, I have no doubt that she does find it a little too much for her nerves."

So that H. C., in attendance upon Lady Maria, had not accompanied us to Egypt. But the reader may remember H. as having gone down channel with us to Dartmouth, leaving his Kentish home for that purpose, where he had made himself conspicuous by climbing the greenhouses like a wild cat, and appropriating the finest bunches

of muscats of Alexandria by way of impromptu dessert, thereby turning the head gardener into a wild man with dangerous tendencies. "There is a certain fine fitness of things in the idea of my accompanying you to Alexandria itself," he had laughed, when we first talked the matter over. "Perhaps we shall find the muscats growing about the streets; we may only have to stretch out our hands and pluck the bunches; but they will never be half so good as those other grapes of Kent."

It was only the case over again that stolen pleasures are sweetest. For we are all apt to forget that the proverb is mere sophistry; the most deceitful of all proverbs. Too often our stolen pleasures, like the apples of old, turn to ashes in the mouth, and like the waters of Meribah, grow bitter to the taste. This, however, does not refer to such boyish freaks as climbing greenhouses and thinning grape-vines. Since those climbing days some years of discretion had been added to H.'s shoulders, and a course of military discipline and training had not been without its usual effect.

So we had started one dark and bitterly cold night from Charing Cross, rejoicing in the hope that in less than thirty hours we should be revelling in the balmy breezes of the Mediterranean. The journey had taken its usual course. A crowded boat; a cold crossing to Calais; substantial fare and delicious hot coffee at the new buffet, which put fresh life into us, and made us feel, like Alexander, anxious for other worlds to conquer; a few polite words to the powers that were resulting in a compartment to ourselves for the rest of the long journey.

Night had given place to a grey dawn when we made the interminable circuit of Paris. After this all the well-known spots succeeded each other; Lyons with its broad rivers flowing side by side; Avignon, that fortress of the middle ages, where the great Palace of the Popes and the Cathedral of Notre Dame des Doms overshadow the waters of the Rhone; Nimes with its Roman, and Arles with its Greek influences and immense amphitheatre, once given over to scenes that happily have passed away, though still devoted to the Bull-fight. The first stage of our journey was over when we rattled through the streets of Marseilles.

Instead of the balmy air we hoped for, a miserable mistral was blowing, which promised badly for the commencement of our voyage *per mare*. They had lighted large wood fires in our rooms, and a strong smell of charcoal burning and a feeling of asphyxia met us on the very threshold. The offending elements were soon withdrawn. The huge salle-à-manger was half lighted for the benefit of benighted travellers, most of whom were on their way to Algiers by Saturday's boat. There they hoped to escape from the universal winter, but, as it fell out, only plunged into deeper depths of snow and ice. A small buzz of conversation was going on, and timid travellers of both sexes were exchanging opinions as to what the sea would prove on

the morrow. One feeble-looking gentleman was holding forth at a small table to a formidable-looking lady, whose upper lip was adorned with a moustache, seated at the next small table.

"I candidly confess," he said, "that I am going to Algiers to avoid the temptations of Monte Carlo. I have generally wintered there, but I have a mania for gambling; I cannot resist it; and having lost half my fortune at Rouge et Noir, I am trying to keep the other half by avoiding the danger."

"Sir," replied the lady in a masculine and very awful voice, "I fear you are a dissipated character, whilst I am a virtuous female, belonging to the very strictest sect of Plymouth Brethren."

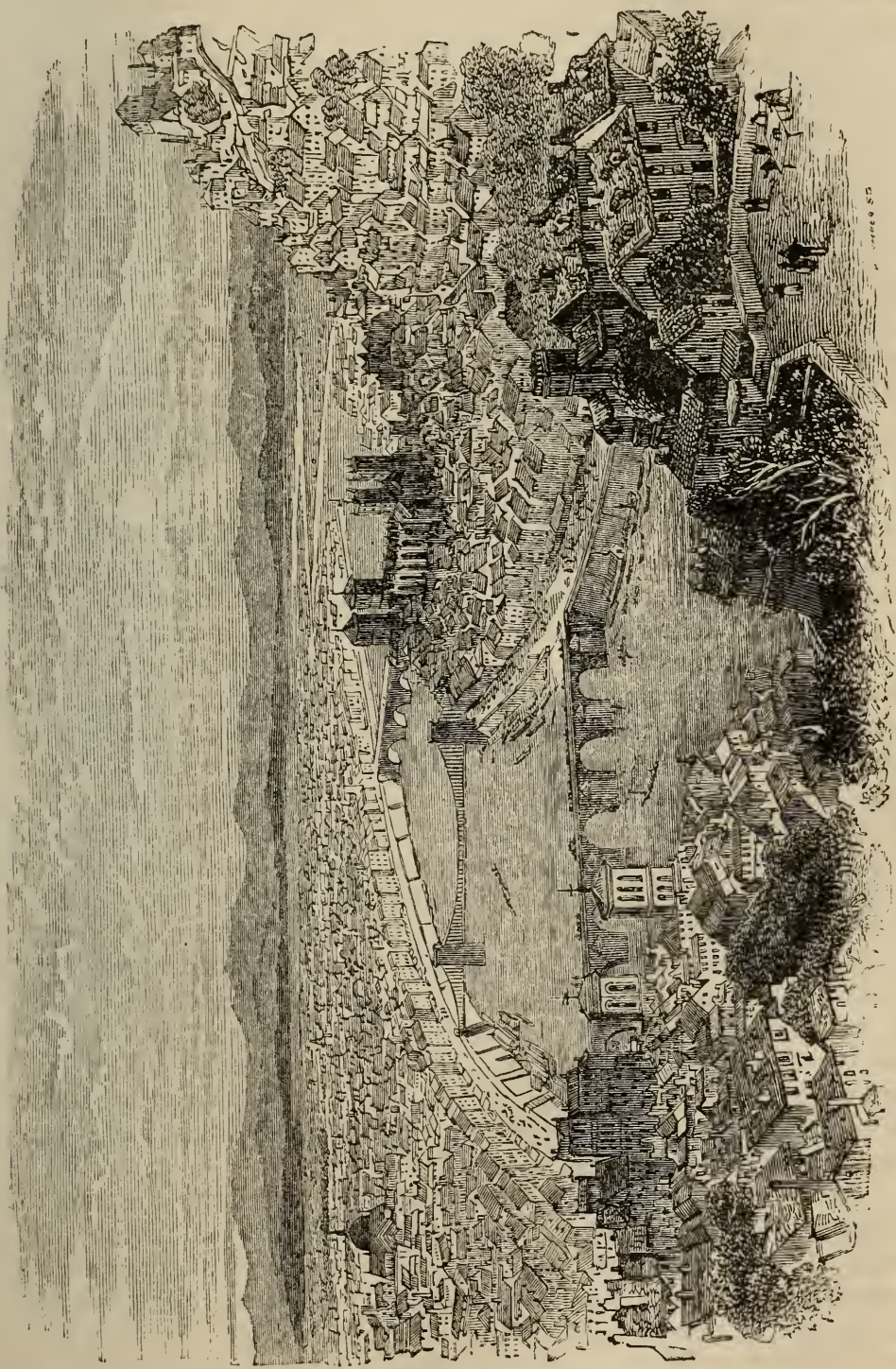
"Plymouth *Brethren*," responded the feeble gentleman, with a very pointed look at the lady's upper lip. "Is that the reason that you wear—but what am I talking about? I beg your pardon. How can you be a Plymouth Brother? Should it not be Plymouth Sister?"

The lady was drinking some hot tea at the moment, and a little of it went the wrong way, and before she could recover her breath, a fresh arrival of late travellers, and a great scraping of chairs and settling into seats (they were noisy Americans) put an end to this small passage at arms. We have often wondered since, whether Algiers turned them into great friends or confirmed enemies.

The morrow brought sunshine with it, if not a very smooth sea. We went down early to the quays and inspected the *Sénégal*, belonging to the Messageries Maritimes, a favourite Service until present experiences very much modified our views on the subject. The berths taken in London were not given to us, and the polite clerk at the office regretted that they had been previously given away in Marseilles. In this matter we fared sufficiently well; one cabin was very much the same as another; but the Commissariat department left much to be desired. The best boats of the Company are those that take the longer voyages: "les bateaux à long cours," as one of the officers expressed it to us: those that merely coast between Marseilles and Jaffa are inferior in all respects. Still, upon the principle of being thankful for small mercies, we had nothing very much to complain of: and compared with the horrors and discomfort of the Austrian Lloyd boat, by which we were forced to return—for reasons to be hereafter given—we were in absolute Paradise.

When we went down to inspect the *Sénégal* that first morning, she was lying off shore in the Bassin de la Joliette. Within the immense shed, running the whole length of the quay, a wily old Marseillais was selling deck chairs. We bought two from him, which he branded with our initials, and we should have fared badly without them. Just as in the old days, it was the fashion for people going out to tea to take their own cup and saucer: and occasionally the custom though not the fashion in leaving—like old Lady C.—to pocket a few of the spoons with their own cup and saucer: so in travelling by sea, it is necessary in these days to take your own deck chair if you

wish for any comfort at all during the voyage. And in spite of letters branded, and cards plainly addressed and attached, your chair will be



LYONS.

appropriated by those who have not been provident enough to bring their own, and have no respect for the laws of meum and tuum.

We were constantly troubled in this way. A passenger, indeed,

one day took possession of one of the chairs and refused to give it up when the steward went to him with a polite intimation that he was trespassing on other people's property. He declared that possession was nine points of the law, and he was much too comfortable to disturb himself. The only excuse we could make for him was that he was a German. At last the bright idea occured to H. of sticking small pins into the cane seats of the chairs whenever we were not occupying them. If rather a severe it was an effective remedy. At the end of three days our chairs remained for ever after perfectly unmolested.

The *Sénégal* was in the bassin, and a boatman rowed us alongside. We had little beyond our trouble for our pains. The head steward was in all the freedom of undress, and seemed to think that no one ought to wish to know anything at that stage of affairs. Accordingly he knew nothing; was as silent as an oracle, and assured us that everything would be known and arranged only when the officials arrived from the office.

We returned to shore no wiser than we had gone on board, and consoled ourselves with a long drive round the town and neighbourhood. It was all new ground to H. Marseilles was bright and sunny, warm in the sheltered by-ways, cold where we met the wind. The Corniche road, following the coast, was especially beautiful. The walls of the gardens upon the slopes, enclosing villas, were richly decorated with hanging creepers of gorgeous colouring. Flowers of every hue met the gaze. Already we felt in the many-tinted atmosphere of the South, where life passes in a rainbow dream. To our right the blue Mediterranean, flashing in the sunshine, was beautiful as the Mediterranean ever is. Out in the centre of the old harbour rose Fort St. Nicholas, built by Vauban for Louis XIV. for a "bastide"—a local term for country-house. Yet beyond, rising grim and stately out of the water, lies the Château d'If on its small island, so exposed to wind and sea that boats can only land here in calm weather. Alexandre Dumas made the castle famous by his wonderful story of Monte Cristo: a keep, built in the early part of the sixteenth century, and used as a State prison. The dark and gloomy dungeons are shown to the visitor, who may well shudder as he thinks of the many lives that have taken their last look upon the world on entering these portals of despair.

Like many another place, Marseilles has increased of late years to proportions little dreamed of in the days when steam was unknown. Its streets rival those of Paris; the Cannebière is a scene of constant animation; its basins and harbours are five times the size they were in the middle of this century; six million tons of shipping every year pass through its waters, two-thirds being the result of importation; it is great in commerce and in manufactures, soap being a chief article of production.

It owes much to its magnificent situation, both as a commer-

cial and a pleasure town. Its merchants are proverbially wealthy, but not very great in cultivating refinement and the fine arts. They have built themselves magnificent villas on the surrounding heights, and pass their lives in alternations of work and luxurious ease. Unable to boast of long pedigrees, they affect to lightly esteem the *ancienne noblesse* of France. In Paris the Faubourg St. Germain is the one with which they are least familiar. And yet—the world is changing: has changed. This state of things existed some years ago; it scarcely exists to-day. Now wealth rules the world, and is the open sesame to the most exclusive circles. We have just heard, indeed, that Lady Maria, the most autocratic and aristocratic of women, proposed to admit Miss de Courcy Flushington into the bosom of her family, and had a serious attack of the nerves when her scheme fell through. Miss Flushington's father had begun life as an ordinary workman in the silver mines of Peru, and subsequently had made his daughter's dowry of two millions entirely out of oil. Not that this in the least reflected upon Miss de Courcy Flushington. She was pretty and accomplished, and if her ways and tones were a little American, that was only to be expected; and according to some, to whom any sort of variety is charming, added to her piquancy. Nine people out of ten would have said that H. C. was a very foolish fellow.

The merchants of Marseilles, then, are very rich, if not very refined; and, to do them justice, they really trouble themselves as little about the ancienne noblesse as they do about the Parisian accent. Their own accent is abominable, and French loses much of its wonderful charm when spoken by a Marseillais. Their villas are palatial, and from the heights they may survey the whole of their flourishing city—all the extent of their quays and harbours; they may watch the shimmering blue waters of the Levant blending with the sky in the far distance, and may almost be pardoned for thinking and saying that their little corner of the world is earth's paradise. It is only a question of comparison and degree, a matter of opinion, after all. We love what we are most familiar with. The Esquimaux is content to envy no man, and the Red Indian would not change places with the Mikado of Japan. In point of fact, the immediate neighbourhood of Marseilles is not very interesting, unless you look seawards.

But if the Marsellais of to-day is a nouveau riche, his town possesses the merit of antiquity. It was the Massilia of the ancient Greeks, a colony said to have been founded by the Phocæans of Asia Minor, driven into exile by Cyrus, King of Persia, six hundred years before the Christian era. They rapidly rose in power, defeated the Carthaginians near Corsica, and three hundred years after their foundation allied themselves to the Romans. But Rome also grew in power and ambition, marched forth with her imperial armies, and Massilia was subdued and conquered by Julius Cæsar.

The town in those days was given up to heathen worship, and a temple of Diana stood where now stands the imposing but unfinished cathedral. On the shore there stood a temple dedicated to Neptune and another to Apollo. There was a great deal of the classic Greek in the atmosphere, and many youths completed their education at Massilia, just as others did at Athens. It is said to have been Christianised by St. Victor in the third century, who was martyred here in the year 287; but another legend declares that it was first introduced by St. Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, whom Our Lord raised from the dead. Later on Massilia was destroyed by the Saracens, was subsequently restored, and became subject to the Vicomtes de Marseille, from whom it took its name.

By many writers the Phocæan account is considered legendary, and it is more generally supposed that Massilia was founded by the Phœnicians, about 900 or 1000 B.C. Inscriptions and bas-reliefs discovered in a street of Marseilles in 1863 seem to point to this theory.

Aristotle composed a treatise on the Massilian Republic, of which only a fragment remains. The wisdom and learning of its institutions have been recorded by Herodotus, Plutarch, Polybius, Justin, Thucydides, Strabo, Cicero and other writers of that time. The Massilian morals were so severe and unflinching that Plautus holds them up as a type of perfection.

After allying themselves to the Romans and forming themselves into a republic, they strengthened their navy and built them large dockyards. Several naval engagements were sustained against the Carthaginians. The Ligurians coming down upon them unsuccessfully, they strongly fortified their city. The subsequent downfall of Carthage and the victories of Marius (Marius has remained to this day the favourite Christian name of the youth of Marseilles) brought Massilia to the height of prosperity. Then came reverses. Having helped the Romans to destroy Carthage and conquer Liguria, she had to submit in turn to the yoke of bondage. Taking part with Pompey, she was attacked by Cæsar, who, at that time in Spain, sent forth his armies in command of Trebonius and Brutus. Surprised in the midst of a luxurious effeminacy, the effect of too much of prosperity (such as afterwards proved fatal to Rome herself), Massilia rose up and made a long and splendid resistance. The destruction of her navy, though it brought her almost to despair, only caused her to redouble her efforts. An epidemic within the walls, which decimated the inhabitants, finally caused her to give up the struggle, and when Cæsar himself arrived from Spain, she opened her gates and surrendered to him. Mindful of her past greatness, he left her her laws and her liberty, but destroyed her implements of war, her fortifications, seized her vessels, her treasures, her neighbouring colonies, and occupied her citadels with his own troops.

In the Middle Ages, Marseilles consisted of three distinct towns,

THE ORANGE BOATS, MARSEILLES.

each possessing its separate governor, territories and port. At the time of the Crusades she had again become as free, independent and flourishing, as before the Roman Conquest. Everything prospered with her. Once more her ports were crowded with shipping, her commerce spread, and she became as wealthy as in the days which had succeeded the conquest of Tyre and Carthage.

This brought down upon her the envy and ambition of other nations, and in 1253 she was forced to yield to Charles I. of Anjou, who promised to maintain all the rights and liberties of the town. But Marseilles, trying to shake off the yoke by declaring her independence and allying herself to Alphonso X., King of Castille, Charles of Anjou marched upon the town, reduced it by famine, beheaded the chief promoters of the revolt, and took possession of the citadel.

In 1481 it was united to France, with a reservation of many privileges, and took a prominent part against Henri IV. in the wars of the Ligue. In 1524 the Constable of Bourbon besieged Marseilles with an army 40,000 strong. After a valiant defence of forty days and nights, they were about to surrender when the women of the town rose in a body and rallied their courage. In three days these women had laid a countermine which under ordinary circumstances would have taken a fortnight to construct, and the town was saved. In their memory one of the boulevards is still called the *Boulevard des Dames.*

Marseilles took an active part in the religious wars of the 16th century. She refused to recognise Henri IV., who succeeded in entering the town through treachery. Then on the 2nd March, 1660, Louis XIV. entered the town by a breach in the ramparts. Marseilles again became united to France, and was rejoicing in the happiness of peaceful days, when on the 25th May, 1720, the Plague broke out, brought to it by *Le grand St. Antoine*, a vessel laden with wool. The saint was not kindly disposed. It proved one of the worst devastations that ever laid low a town, and claimed 50,000 victims. The Bishop of Marseilles celebrated mass with bare feet and a halter round his neck, offering himself as an expiatory sacrifice to the Divine wrath.

In later times her hatred of Napoleon I. was profound. She accused him of the ruin of her commerce and the misery of her working population. When he landed at Cannes she organized an expedition to eject him, but Napoleon allowed them no time for operations. The result of Waterloo caused her the wildest joy and rejoicing. The tricoloured flag was trampled under foot; the people wished to disarm the garrison commanded by Verdier; but at the cry of "Vive le roi!" the soldiers responded by singing the Marseillaise. When Verdier prudently retired to Toulon, the Royalists, left in possession of the town, launched into the wildest excesses. A colony of Mamelukes, who had followed in the train of Napoleon

STROMBOLI.

from Egypt, were massacred, together with every one in the least suspected of Imperialism. Then followed pillage and destruction; until the merchants of the town, alarmed at so much lawlessness, marched against the insurgents, and order was restored.

Louis XIV. withdrew from Marseilles all her privileges and since that time she has possessed only the distinction of a seaport and commercial town. But at all times Marseilles has taken foremost rank in the annals of her country. The Marseillais, whatever his fault, has almost always been noted for perseverance and determination, and so, to-day, Marseilles bears away the palm for prosperity. It has been very much of a royal and a loyal town, and suffered much in the great revolution. Now it is strongly republican. In 1792, by an unhappy error, it sent an immense number of galley slaves to Paris, who conducted themselves more like fiends than human beings. It was for these that Rougon de l'Isle, an Alsatian officer of Engineers, composed the famous Marseillaise hymn, "Allons, Enfans de la Patrie!" which has ever since remained the Republican National air of France.

The reign of Louis Philippe had been a very prosperous one for Marseilles; no wonder that she was a staunch Royalist; but her most remarkable era was from 1850 to 1870. No town in Europe ever made such strides in so short a time. She has become the first maritime, the first commercial city in France; her trade has assumed gigantic proportions; she is necessary to all nations; and her wealth, as in the days of Carthage, has once more become unbounded.

Thus, in spite of its busy scenes, its commercial aspect, its ports and warehouses crowded with shipping and merchandise, we felt on classic ground. It was a little difficult to realise whilst passing through these wide, modern thoroughfares, that Greece and Rome had once held sway here; that Tyre and Carthage had contributed to the prosperity of ancient Marseilles—and to her downfall; that on the site of that unfinished cathedral a temple dedicated to the worship of Diana once stood, and another to Apollo on the shores where the blue waters of the tideless sea were for ever surging. All around us were the slopes on which the town is built, bound by an encircling chain of hills, rich in orange groves, oliveyards and vineyards.

Our driver, tired of the Corniche road, whose charms were too well-known to be appreciated by him, presently turned into the long and magnificent Prado, a continuation of the Rue de Rome, lined with trees on both sides, and forming the favourite and fashionable promenade of the people of Marseilles. From this we passed into the old town; old without being picturesque. The streets were narrow and not too clean, the people matched their surroundings. A steep ascent brought us to the famous rocky hill, with its Votive Chapel, Notre Dame de la Garde. The once small building has been enlarged into an important Romanesque church with a lofty bell

MESSINA.

tower, built in 1864. This tower is crowned by a statue of the Virgin, gilded and in bad taste. Of the original chapel built in 1214 very little remains. The present Byzantine church was erected entirely by voluntary contributions. It is richly decorated with costly white marbles from Carrara, red marbles from Africa, green marbles from the Alps. The walls are covered with votive offerings, many of them frightful caricatures of scenes through which their donors have passed. Ostrich eggs, silver and other models of vessels, rope-ends that have saved men from drowning, are religiously suspended from the ceiling. The original image of the Virgin in olive wood, and very ancient, is kept below in the crypt. Throughout the neighbourhood and far down the shores of the Mediterranean, the church and the image are the objects of the utmost reverence. They have given rise to many a pilgrimage; many a miracle is supposed to have been worked here; and many a pair of crutches, hanging upon the walls or suspended from the roof, was discarded by cripples who have felt themselves cured whilst invoking the merciful intervention of Notre Dame de la Garde.

From these heights the view is wide-spread and magnificent. Marseilles lies below us, covering the slopes with its multitude of houses. On the surrounding hills are innumerable country places, resorts of the rich merchants in summer. Encircling all is the chain of hills with thin weird-looking olive-yards, luscious vineyards, fragrant orange groves. Far down one has a complete view of the splendid docks and basins; the acres and acres of quays; the ports crowded with shipping, where flags of all nations are flying in the breeze and enlivening the scene. At one point one notices a great stir and bustle, a great commotion and animation; the quay is crowded with young men and women hurrying up and down a gangway, baskets of oranges upon their heads. If we were only nearer to them we should hear that their work was carried on with much shout and laughter, much badinage, a gay insouciance; as if the day and the hour were sufficient for them, and life was all happiness and roses. The white-winged boats stretch down in a long row, full of grace and beauty. It is one of the liveliest scenes in Marseilles.

Beyond all this, rising out of the water like twin creations, are the Isle d'If and the Isle St. Jean, the latter once in the possession of the Knights of Malta; the former with its castle, where once Mirabeau was imprisoned, and where Monte Cristo went through his wonderful adventures. Afar off lie the deep blue waters of the Mediterranean, full of beauty and repose.

Yet one very soon has enough of Marseilles under our present conditions. An approaching embarkation; a wonder as to how it will all be: what the passage, what the people: everything contributes to make one somewhat restless and unsettled. A sea voyage in prospective seems full of charm: when the moment arrives the charm vanishes as mist before the sun: it may return with more or less

reality, but never reaches the first "glow of early thought." No doubt there is nothing like a sea voyage for health; but pleasure is another matter.

So we were glad when, that Saturday afternoon, the hour struck for departure. Down we went to the Quai de la Joliette, where the good ship *Sénégal*, now alongside, was getting up steam. The head-steward, now magnificent in silver lace and white gloves, had put on his royal manner, and received us as if we had been ambassadors. The gentlemen from the office were in the saloon, arranging the cabins. Everything was satisfactorily settled as far as we were concerned; one berth, one cabin, seemed very much like another, for they were all more or less amidships. It was also a pleasure to find that we were not to be overcrowded with passengers and that there were no small children amongst them.

The last moment is generally a scene of hurrying and confusion. There are always passengers for shore who are behind time; bells may ring for ever, they never move until the vessel itself is under weigh. Last goodbyes are lingering. Some of the last to walk down the steep gangway were two women in the picturesque dress of nuns, who had escorted to her cabin a third and evidently very dear sister. The farewell apparently was for ever, for they waited long, and left with eyes red from weeping. The sister never appeared during the voyage. After the nuns came the office officials, by no means in the same state of depression. The last bell rang, ropes were withdrawn, and we were under steam. We made way slowly but surely. Gradually Marseilles with all its shipping passed from view; the houses upon the slopes disappeared, the encircling hills grew faint and shadowy. Notre Dame on the heights was the last to fade away, whilst the gilded image crowning the bell tower, seemed to upraise its arms in the act of benediction.

We were soon well out upon the blue waters. The group of islands was passed, the sea in all its beauty lay stretched before us. We should not again touch land until we reached Alexandria. Night soon fell upon that first day, shutting out everything excepting a great waste of black waters and an apparently illimitable, star-gemmed sky.

From the very beginning the Mediterranean showed us that she did not intend to behave amiably. From first to last the sea was choppy aud the air was cold. We had never known her in this unkindly mood; always she had been as a sea of glass, the air warm and sparkling; this was a new and not very agreeable experience. A thoroughly good storm at sea is worth encountering, but a cold wind for ever blowing and a choppy sea that never stays its disagreeable motion, these are discomforts one could well do without.

Day after day passed with little change. Some of our passengers proved very agreeable and did much to lighten the monotony of the journey. Particularly so were an English General officer and a French Count. Both were great travellers, had seen much of the world.

The latter was especially enterprising; was a member of the true ancienne noblesse; a keen lover of sport; a great horseman, possessing many of those manly attributes that are less prevalent with the French than with us. His anecdotes and adventures were endless, and hour after hour passed pleasantly and quickly in his society. When the day came for our lines to separate—as separate they did at Cairo, when he went up the Nile, and we did not—it was with sincere regret on our part.

On the journey down the Mediterranean, very little of the coast was seen. We almost sighted our dear old Majorca, but not quite; she was too far behind us. In due time we steamed through the Straits of Bonifacio, and saw Corsica on one side of us, Sardinia on the other. The former looked green and bright; an oasis in a desert of water; the latter seemed wild and barren. Both possess their charms, and are worth visiting at the right season of the year.

Sardinia has not made very great progress in the way of civilisation. Few people visit the island, with its numerous chains of mountains; its immense plain, once so fertile; its thousands of prehistoric monuments, so peculiar to itself; its red deer and its partridges, affording such good sport; its innumerable small streams, that help to feed the four larger streams flowing to the sea. Here may be found all the vegetation of North Africa; certain parts of its shores are lined with palm-trees that grow in clumps and groups, and stand out boldly against the clear sky. Its olive trees are the largest known specimens. There is much to repay a visit; not least attraction of all that it is not overrun by the modern tourist. The forests, once so dense, are fast disappearing. They have been given up to the charcoal-burner, and however picturesque he may be in his work, it is a work of destruction, for ever going on. The day of sorrow will come to the people. Sardinia, once the granary of Rome, is becoming less and less fertile; and when her forests have disappeared and with them much of her rainfall, there will be little work left for the sickle.

Corsica, the sister and much smaller island, is better known and more frequented. The charming climate of Ajaccio attracts many in the early spring of the year. It is rich in vegetation and in many natural beauties. Its green hills and its wild ravines are matchless. Its people are interesting studies, but woe be unto those who fall under the Vendetta. Their hate is deadly, and vengeance to them is more than life.

Time passed on, and Sicily's lovely shores opened up. Round that point and promontory we pictured Palermo as we had last seen it, a veritable day-dream, an earthly paradise possessing few rivals. Once more, we saw Etna sending forth her volume of smoke, towering into the heavens and overshadowing Catania. Messina, the most important but least interesting spot in all Sicily, slept in

BETWEEN SCYLLA AND CHARYBDIS.

the sunshine; and we longed once more to be treading the classic and deeply interesting ground of Syracuse, with its graceful pools, where grow the lilies and the reeds, and the papyrus raises its beautiful head.

On our other hand rose the curious Lipari Islands, with their sharp peaks and wild and barren conformations, looking as if they were the result of some wild upheaval of nature, some great volcanic disturbance. Stromboli was sending forth its smoke in great volumes, a miniature Etna.

Then came the Straits of Messina, and we passed between Scylla and Charybdis. Reggio, at the extreme south of Italy, looked wonderfully picturesque, backed by the mountains of the Aspromonte, a spot made sacred by the visit of St. Paul on his way from Cæsarea to Rome. The keen wind that blew took much from our pleasure as we passed through all this wonderfully interesting portion of the Levant. Every one was glad of great coats and ulsters; the ladies were muffled in furs. Was it possible that we were hastening to a land where winter was unknown? The shores both of Italy and Sicily looked very unlike the perpetual summer with which imagination endows these romantic regions.

Once through the Straits, we felt that our vessel really pointed towards Alexandria. There was only a steady course to pursue. Certainly the air grew warmer as we neared Egypt. Wednesday, the last day dawned, the last night fell. By daylight on Thursday morning the long low shores of Egypt were visible. In front of us was Alexandria, the lighthouse on Ras-el-Jeen, Pompey's Pillar, and the Ramleh Palace standing out conspicuously. Before six o'clock we had come to an anchor.

On first approaching Alexandria, the aspect of the place is anything but striking and romantic. The earliest view of this most ancient of countries—this land of the lotus and the Sacred Ibis—is certainly not impressive. Your ideas of Eastern magnificence—the glory with which you have invested this city founded by Alexander the Great—your hope of Arabian pomp and Arabian magic—so closely allied to the Egyptian—all this for the moment is rudely dispersed.

Nowhere can you see anything gorgeous and picturesque. Mosques and minarets do not rear their stately heads. Cleopatra's Needles, once so conspicuous, no longer exist here. One graces the unromantic banks of the Thames; the other, presented by Ismail Pacha to the Americans, reposes in New York amidst modern and very unclassical surroundings, proving once more how much extremes may meet.

During six long days in crossing the Mediterranean you have indulged in Eastern visions; your imagination has raised palaces and temples such as the ancients delighted in—the ancients, who loved everything that was gigantic, gorgeous, magnificent and dignified; you have revelled once more in all the stories of the Arabian

Nights, filling your mind with a rich imagery that no earthly power could ever produce—for what reality ever came up to our dreams? You have longed for a first sight of these wonders of the land of Egypt, sacred to the memory of corn and wine, of all that is classical, historical and religious. And in the early morning your first glance rests upon the pale sand; upon long, low, flat reaches; so low and flat that twenty miles away they cannot be seen. They are white and barren; you look in vain even for the palm tree to break the monotony of the level, and stand out as an object of delicate grace and beauty against the flushing sky of sunrise. There only do you find gorgeousness and magnificence, but the hand of man has no part in it. You have watched the darkness slowly creep away; a light break in the east, pale and faint, but every moment increasing, until crimson flames flash about the sky and an orange glow paints the east, and at last the sun shoots above the horizon. Here, indeed, you have gorgeousness and magnificence enough, increased a thousandfold by the wonderful air, more bright and dry and crisp than any you ever breathed before.

Thus, as we came alongside, there was an Eastern glow over everything that was very dazzling, but it was the effect of light and atmosphere, not of "gorgeous palaces and cloud-capp'd towers."

The quay was crowded with a throng of natives, of different sects and nations. They looked picturesque in their various dresses and decidedly gained enchantment by distance. A perfect Babel of conversation was going on amongst them, and they pushed and hustled each other without ceremony. If they had been going in for sedition and mutiny they could hardly have made greater uproar or looked more fierce and glaring. The very moment we were alongside they swarmed into the lower decks and a most bewildering pandemonium commenced. Every passenger was surrounded by a crowd of swarthy, dark-faced Egyptians, each one of whom seemed ready to produce an invisible dagger if you did not employ him. One dark man, taller and stronger than most of them, bore upon his cap the words Hôtel Khedevial. Him we seized upon, and he soon cleared a passage for us. The stewards at this moment were of very little use; they were running to and fro as men demented, and rather added to the confusion. Willing and obliging they had been throughout the passage, but here their reign and their usefulness seemed to come to an end.

Our tall guide took up our baggage as if it had been a mere feather's weight and, hurling what seemed the most tremendous anathemas right and left of him, cleared us a way through the throng and put us into one of the multitude of open flys waiting on the quay.

Then came the Custom-house, where, however, nothing was looked at and we were hardly called upon to leave our seats. They are far more particular with travellers leaving the country than

with those entering. Duty is exacted upon every article of Egyptian make that you may take away with you: apparently a short-sighted policy.

At our entrance we met the nicest and most straightforward official that we found in Egypt. He was standing at the Custom-house door in his green uniform, paper and pencil in hand. He it was who passed us without giving us the trouble of opening anything. Backsheesh we knew to be the law of the land, a recognised and admitted institution. His civility was so marked, his manner so frank and gracious, that we felt it as a welcome to Egypt. We were really anxious to make some return, and delicately produced a substantial coin. For the first and only time in Egypt our backsheesh was refused—yet so universal is the custom that it created no painful feeling and was declined with a frank and winning smile. Never again did we meet with so much honesty. Backsheesh is the password of the people. It is said to be the first word they hear on entering the world, the last they utter on leaving it. Even the smallest children, when they can scarcely run and before they can speak, will follow your carriage and cry "Sheesh! Sheesh!" having as yet only mastered one syllable of this Open Sesame. Perhaps they have more excuse than some other countries, who indulge in it almost as freely. Egypt is very poor, and, in too many cases, with travellers whose hearts go before their reason, they have only to ask and to receive.

Finally we found ourselves clear of the throng and the Babel, the quay and the Custom-house, dashing through the streets of Alexandria, our guide like a small Pompey's pillar towering beside the driver.

Of Eastern influence and magnificence we saw nothing. Alexandria has of late years risen immensely in prosperity and wealth; but it is entirely due to commercial success, and she is absolutely a commercial city. Her streets and squares are new, many of them dating from the bombardment of 1881, when damage to the extent of nearly five million pounds had to be paid as indemnity by the Egyptian government. Many of the new buildings are palatial and such as you would find in the very finest parts of Paris or London. Alexandria, indeed, might be likened in many ways to a small Paris, with her cafés, her boulevards and her shops, and the trees that line some of the thoroughfares. It is on the outskirts of the town that you come upon the Eastern influence and atmosphere, and these, the most interesting parts, we did not pass on our road to the hotel.

We were in no way disappointed; we knew Alexandria to be modern in aspect as she is in prosperity, and we were content to wait for our Oriental impressions. Our guide on the box, with his dark face and flashing eyes, his turban and his Eastern dress, was a picturesque object enough, and an earnest of greater things to come.

THE EVENT AT MILFORD.

THE Manor had found a tenant at last; so much was certain. The news awoke great interest, and gave rise to numerous conjectures among the good people of Milford. The house had been empty for a year or more; a handsome house, substantial in the main, but falling a little out of repair, and looking somewhat desolate as it stood, with closed shutters, in the midst of its neglected grounds. As yet nothing was known of the new-comer beyond his name—the well-sounding name of Meredith. It might fairly be assumed that he possessed considerable means, since carpenters and masons had been set at work immediately, refitting the residence against his arrival. Milford, a little inland town, languishing for excitement, congratulated itself on the prospect of so desirable an acquisition.

"How pretty those French windows are, opening on the lawn," observed Kitty Gray. "I wonder what sort of people they are?"

"That is what nobody can tell you," replied her sister, Miss Lavinia. "Respectable people, I hope."

"Oh, of course. But are they young or old, and are there any girls among them——"

"Or any young men?" suggested Miss Lavinia.

"Well—yes. Where's the harm? I am sure a nice young man would be a treasure here. We have only half-a-dozen among twice as many girls. And I wonder if they will be friendly and social, or keep to themselves? If they are only good neighbours it will be so pleasant. There are no such rooms for dancing anywhere."

"True. But Colonel Meredith and his wife are very probably a steady old couple, who will go nowhere but to church, and would be horrified at the very mention of a dance. I advise you to moderate your expectations."

Though Miss Lavinia gave such sober counsel she was not herself entirely wanting in curiosity. She thought, though she never hinted such a thing, that there was possibly no Mrs. Meredith in the case. The colonel of that name might be a well-to-do bachelor, or a widower not inconsolable. The possibility was interesting. Miss Lavinia, though considered by her sister Kitty and all that set as a confirmed old maid, though she was only twenty-seven, did by no means regard herself as hopelessly fixed in that estate. Indeed, it was hard to say why she had not long ago exchanged it for prosperous matrimony. A neat little figure, a soft blue eye, a complexion still delicately pink and white, rendered her appearance very pleasing; her temper was admirable, her domestic attainments of

the highest order. She pondered in her own mind the fatuity of men, and was amazed thereat.

A few days later a travelling-carriage, laden with trunks, was seen to drive in at the great gate of the Meredith place. Expectation was on tiptoe. Everybody went to church on Sunday morning, and dozens of bright eyes were on the look-out for the entrance of the strangers.

Miss Lavinia was disappointed: including Kitty. No pretty girls appeared, and no elaborate youths. Colonel Meredith was a gentlemanly person of middle age; the handsome, fashionably-dressed woman, some years younger, was evidently his wife.

The pair were soon pronounced an acquisition to the neighbourhood. Miss Lavinia was rather dilatory about calling. She could not help feeling a slight coolness towards the Mrs. Meredith so superfluously present, and was in no haste to make her acquaintance. But report spoke so highly of the taste with which the house was fitted up, and of the agreeable manners of the inmates, that she overcame her prejudice. She was rewarded by finding Mrs. Meredith the most delightful of women, ready to be charmed with her new home, and full of plans for enlivening it. Even Kitty, who was apt to regard anyone at twenty-five as nearing the regions of decrepitude, relented toward Mrs. Meredith, who must have passed five years beyond that limit. The lady's dress, her air, the arrangements of her dwelling, speedily became the standard of admiring contemporaries. She made the place gay with dinner-parties and evening gatherings; she encouraged picnics and boating; she gave the young people frequent opportunities of dancing in the spacious rooms Kitty had commended. Her own dancing, when now and then she was prevailed upon to join a set, was exquisite; the girls tried in vain to imitate its unconscious grace. She sang, too, the newest music, in a voice of velvet and honey. Never, in short, did a woman so brilliant, gracious and accomplished, dawn on a delighted little country-town, and her popularity corresponded to the measure of her charms.

The Colonel, meanwhile, was somewhat in the shade. His manners were gravely polite, and he interested himself more in the culture of land than in social gaieties. He was considered a quiet person, a perfect gentleman, and most especially fortunate in possessing such a wife!

It was a pleasant summer in Milford; for none more so than for Miss Lavinia. Mrs. Meredith had taken to her from the very first, and they were soon on terms of intimacy. It was flattering to be sought by the great lady of the neighbourhood; one, too, whose society was in itself a pleasure. And as time went on, Miss Lavinia had another source of interest. Mr. Elwood, who had so long held bachelor sway over the broad acres of Elwood Grange, betrayed symptoms of a disposition to admit a partner of his rule. He escorted Miss Lavinia home from one festive gathering, he talked

with her for full ten minutes at another. He called at the house to see her father, and brought with him, casually, a basket of flowers and fruit for Miss Lavinia. Kitty rallied her sister on these indications, and the raillery was received with pleasure. Similar demonstrations from the same quarter had been regarded coolly seven or eight years before, but time is a powerful educator, and alters our views of many things.

"My dear," said Mrs. Meredith one morning, with a twinkle of amusement in her bright brown eyes, "what does all this nonsense of Kitty's mean? What has Mr. Elwood been about?"

"Kitty is so giddy," replied Miss Lavinia, blushing slightly. "He has shown me a little ordinary civility, that is all."

"Of course it is all," nodded her friend. "Don't let it go farther. I have set my heart on something quite different for you. The Colonel's brother is coming next week; a most delightful man. A year or two older than the Colonel, but you would never think it. I am no match-maker, I would scorn to be one. I only say, wait till you have seen my brother before you decide in Mr. Elwood's favour."

"Dear me," said Miss Lavinia, putting in a modest disclaimer, "what difference could it possibly make?"

"I know my brother's tastes pretty well," her friend affirmed, "and I can guess something of yours. Mr. Elwood is a worthy man—highly respectable—but I flatter myself that my brother —— Well, we shall see what we shall see."

"Oh, you are too partial," said Miss Lavinia.

"To you or to Evan?"

"To me, of course. I don't doubt that Mr. Meredith deserves all you can say of him; I am sure he must, if he is at all like the Colonel. So his name is Evan—Evan Meredith. What a pretty name."

"And a good one, too, though I say it. The Merediths belong to the Welsh aristocracy."

"Welsh?" queried Miss Lavinia. Her knowledge of that nation was not extended, and had not prepared her to regard it in a patrician light.

"Certainly. Don't you know that the families of Wales are to all other ancient families as—as an oak to a shrub, or the stars to a lamp! The head of the Merediths lives in a castle among the Welsh mountains. It's rather interesting. An old family and a great castle, and troops of retainers—don't you think so?" Perhaps an observer might have detected a little malice in the smile with which the handsome, elegant woman regarded her unconscious companion as she spoke.

"Indeed I do. And Mr. Meredith is coming next week, you say?"

"Yes. He will be here for our show, I hope."

"Dear Mrs. Meredith, he will despise such little country doings."

"Despise them! Not he. He takes an interest in everything connected with agriculture. He is a great landowner himself, you know. And now I want you to advise me about what I shall wear on the day. Is this pale silk——"

The two ladies were presently deep in consultation, which Miss Lavinia found so interesting that she stayed beyond her time. During her hurried walk home she had leisure, nevertheless, to consider the odd turns of fortune here below. At no very distant period her only prospect was that of remaining a maiden in her father's house—and now what a vista opened before her. Poor Mr. Elwood! Her heart inclined to him, she thought kindly of his numerous merits; yet there rose to her fancy the figure of the Colonel's brother, invested with all the charm of the unknown. Surely, as her friend suggested, it was best to wait and see.

II.

Mr. Meredith arrived—an improved edition of the Colonel. The Colonel was tall, but his brother was taller; straight, but the brother boasted a bearing yet more erect. All Milford pronounced him the finer-looking man.

He had been received cordially, let us hope, by his relations, and in the evening taken across the way and presented to Miss Lavinia. She found him very interesting, and Mr. Elwood's star began to pale.

"Well, Isabel," said Mr. Meredith, after their return home, as he lounged comfortably in a great damask-covered easy-chair, "you seem to have secured a good time for yourself at any rate."

"Don't you think it will pay? You needn't go on if that is your opinion."

"I *mean* to go on, of course; it certainly wouldn't pay if I did not; you are always so fiery! But it might have been done a great deal cheaper. Look at these carpets and mirrors and curtains!"

"I dare say. We might have lived in some hovel, but I have roughed it long enough. I think both of you owe me so much, at least. You begrudge it to me, it seems—a few months of humdrum ease in this obscure corner, where you wouldn't stay a week yourself, at any price!"

"You are determined to quarrel to-night, Bel. I don't begrudge you anything. Have all you can make of it, and welcome. It is amusing to see how you carry off your part. Doesn't it bore you?"

"Not much. It is entertaining to see how completely people can be gulled, and how good an actress I can make. Then it's pleasant, once in a way, to be thought respectable. Such a novelty to me, you know," she added, with some bitterness.

"That's all the charm," he answered coolly. "I know your tastes

and respectability would soon pall upon them. But how did you ever get on such terms with a family like these Grays? *They* are the real sort, I take it."

"Certainly, the best people here. It is easy enough. If you had sufficient self-command to live decently for a few weeks, you would find it so."

"Perhaps," lifting his eyebrows, "if the game were worth the candle. But what induced you to turn me over to the spinster? There was the pretty little sister with the red lips and sparkling eyes; it would have been no task to play the amiable to *her*."

"Probably not. But do you think she would have looked at you? I have my reasons. If anything goes wrong we shall need every interest enlisted in our behalf."

When the pair drove down the next morning to the show—a combination of fruit and flowers and ladies' fancy needlework—nothing could be sunnier than the lady's aspect. She smiled brightly as she bowed hither and thither to her friends, or turned from time to time to address some observation to her brother. The Colonel was already on the ground. He had a conspicuous position among the judges, besides a general oversight of the occasion. Someone was needed in such a place, to whom any little question of order or precedence could be referred, and the Colonel's standing rendered it eminently fitting that he should be the man.

The show was like many other gatherings of the kind. The tent was pitched upon a grassy level sprinkled with trees and shrubs, which already began to glow with gorgeous colour. A stream, clear with that marvellous clearness of water in autumn, flowed past, reflecting the deep blue sky, with its drifting masses of white cloud. There was no chill in the air; only a crispness, a spirit exhilarating as champagne. A gaily-dressed throng poured into the tent or spread about the grounds; all was life, movement, interest, while in the resplendent air every object stood sharply forth, intensified in colour. The whole gay and shifting scene resembled a brilliant panorama.

Through the cheerful crowd Isabel Meredith and her brother drove slowly, attracting general notice and approval. Every one was glad to meet her eye and exchange a friendly salutation. She had paid the occasion the compliment of dressing handsomely, and the rich, dark hues of her attire set off her sumptuous brunette beauty. "Lovely," "magnificent," "superb," were the murmured comments that followed her progress.

At the door of the tent Miss Lavinia awaited her friend. "I am so glad you have come!" she exclaimed. "You are on the committee, and we can do nothing without you." Just then her glance encountered Mr. Meredith's; he bowed with an air of respectful gallantry; she acknowledged it with a certain pleasant flutter of spirits. Nevertheless, she did not forget to wonder if Mr. Elwood were on the ground. She had not seen him yet, but he was sure to

be here; after contributing so largely to the exhibition, he would not stay away.

"Now Evan," said his sister, "we shall leave you to take care of yourself. Miss Gray and I have work to do. There is plenty to look at, and you can be abundantly entertained."

Spite of this dismissal, Mr. Meredith preferred to loiter in the ladies' footsteps, continually questioning Miss Lavinia as to the design and use of various articles. She bore the annoyance with exemplary good humour.

"Whose is this, did you say? Mrs. Meredith's—don't you see the card? Look, my dear; there is the article you were so doubtful about sending; the handsomest thing here!"

"Really, it makes a very neat appearance," said the owner, surveying it complacently. "But how much handsome work there is of every sort; a vast deal more than I should have thought it possible to get together. Speaks well for the industry of our ladies, does it not, Evan?"

"It is amazing," he answered. "I am quite bewildered among so many splendours. I do not see, Miss Gray, how you can ever come to any just decision. You will make almost as many enemies as there are exhibitors."

"We must do the best we can. One thing is certain; we shall all be agreed in giving many of the best prizes to your sister. No one will take offence at that, at any rate."

"Ah! she is liked among her neighbours, then?"

"Exceedingly. How could it be otherwise?—so handsome, and so agreeable."

"Thank you, Miss Gray. I am delighted to hear it. Praise of Isabel is quite a personal affair with me. Be good enough to look the other way," he added, as Mrs. Meredith turned to them from the contemplation of a bit of embroidery which had given room for these few words aside; "Miss Gray and I are having a little conversation not designed for your ear."

"What?" she asked, laughing. "Am I *de trop*—already?"

Miss Lavinia hurried to her friend's side. "My dear, how *can* you?" she whispered, in an agitated voice. "You're too wicked. What will your brother think?"

"No matter what. He knows me of old. But come, I will be on my good behaviour. I have satisfied my conscience about the work; haven't you? Now for the flowers and fruit."

Here, as elsewhere, Mrs. Meredith was paramount. Her verbenas, her geraniums, were the glory of the floral department, while a pyramid of pansies, unmatched for size and beauty, called forth exclamations of delight from all who saw them.

"You must have completely robbed your garden and greenhouses," said Miss Lavinia.

"Yes. But what is one's garden at such a time? I consider it

quite a patriotic duty to sacrifice ourselves for the good of the occasion." And all who heard her were flattered by this identifying of her interests with their own.

"Well, Lavinia," she continued, when the tour of inspection was complete, "we may as well get our 'associates' together, and decide on things. You really *must* go, Evan; you will be sadly in our way. I want to have this business over," she added to Lavinia, as her brother moved on, "so that you will be at liberty to enjoy yourself. You must drive a few times around the course with Evan."

"I couldn't think of troubling Mr. Meredith."

"I don't think it will trouble him. He wanted to drive you down this morning and come back for me, but I told him that would be a little *too* precipitate."

"Dear Mrs. Meredith, you are brimful of mischief this morning."

"Nay, I think it is you who have done the mischief. No matter, though; let us to business." And the next half hour being given to deliberation and discussion with their fellow-judges, the rival merits of pincushions, patchwork and embroidery were finally adjusted.

Mr. Meredith was soon at hand to prefer his request. The Colonel's horse was swift and powerful, the little carriage light and strong. They dashed round the course at a rate which afforded Miss Lavinia considerably more terror than enjoyment. Her charioteer halted at sight of her pale cheeks and trembling lips.

"Pray, pray excuse me," he said, with profuse apologies. "I so seldom have a lady by my side. You do not like such a rapid pace. It was most careless, most thoughtless of me!"

"You must excuse *me*," said Miss Lavinia breathlessly, the colour coming back to her cheeks with a pink suffusion very pretty to look at. "I am quite ashamed. It must seem so foolish."

"Not at all. For my own part, I am not an admirer of very courageous women. One has never a chance to protect or re-assure them. Timidity, Miss Gray, is one of the greatest charms of your sex."

Miss Lavinia looked blushfully down, conscious of possessing this charm, at least, in perfection.

"Perhaps you wish to alight," continued her companion. "Though if you will trust me, if you have not been too much alarmed, I beg you will continue our drive."

Miss Lavinia murmured her perfect confidence. The good steed being well held in by Mr. Meredith's powerful arm, they proceeded at a more reasonable pace. Miss Lavinia, recovering herself, glanced about over the pleasant scene. How many carriages, how many people; and how the eyes of those people followed their own progress! She was not insensible to a little thrill of gratified vanity at being thus the chosen companion of the handsome and distinguished stranger. She sought to know if Mr. Elwood were in the crowd, and presently discerned him, talking with a group of ladies. He

bowed with an air of restraint and gravity which she at once referred to Mr. Meredith's position at her side. Her heart softened; she was sorry to have annoyed him. Yet, as she told herself, he could not expect her to refuse all other attentions, unless—and even then she was not quite sure——

Her companion's voice broke in upon these musings. "Delightful season of the year, is it not? For me there is nothing like it. Spring is crude, and summer quite prosaic, in comparison."

"It is beautiful, certainly," said Miss Lavinia, in a soft voice, "but rather mournful. Don't you find it so?"

"Ah, you mean from association. It reminds one of human life—and of decay—and winter coming. But I am familiarised to such thoughts, you know. They don't strike me harshly as they do those who are in their summer still."

Delicious flattery! This handsome, stately man assuming that he had advanced so far beyond her! She wished to say something consoling, encouraging, but could think of nothing that did not sound too personal. A little gentle sentiment was quite in Miss Lavinia's line, and the fine dark eyes of Mr. Meredith invested his words with an additional charm.

Isabel Meredith meanwhile loitered about, amused and admired. The rustic character of the occasion, the very mild type of its excitements, did not bore her in the least. Hers was a nature that took its colouring from adjacent objects, and she felt quite capable of being the gracious lady of the manor, which she appeared. The dramatic element within her found scope in playing her part, as she had said; to have all the accessories in keeping gave her interest and occupation. "How these people who are so attentive would run from me if they knew!" she soliloquised. "I wonder how many of them would act differently in the same set of circumstances. I should have been a steady, respectable character enough if I had been brought up out of harm's way, with plenty of means to gratify my tastes. I daresay I might have been as virtuous as that kind-hearted simpleton who is so delighted with my precious brother's company. Here she comes! Well, my love," she said to Miss Lavinia as soon as they were alone, "you do look most uncommonly bright! What is it? Has Evan been talking sentiment?"

Miss Lavinia disclaimed the possibility of such a thing, yet the drive had left on her mind a pleasing impression quite removed from the ordinary effect of an exchange of civilities with a casual acquaintance. She felt a little disappointed on learning that Mr. Meredith's stay would be so short; he was to leave the day after the morrow. "But this is not his last visit, you may be sure," said his sister, meaningly. "I am confident that we shall see him again before long."

Meanwhile, Mr. Elwood kept at a distance. Miss Lavinia could not but regret his self-distrust. Mr. Meredith was fascinating, it is

true; still he had not obliterated all previous impressions. Vainly did she strive to re-assure the bashful swain by a friendly smile or glance; he held entirely aloof.

III.

THE Bank of Milford was a humble institution compared with the leviathans of the metropolis; yet it ministered admirably well to the necessities of the farmers and merchants and cattle buyers of the region. It was a great convenience to the holders of securities. Many an individual, who would have lain through sleepless nights, dreading a burglar in every unaccustomed sound, slumbered tranquilly when once assured that his bonds were deposited in the strong vault within the impenetrable safe of the Milford bank.

The building stood in its own little yard, shady with horse-chestnut trees, between the dwellings of the cashier and the manager. Its heavily-studded doors and iron-shuttered windows frowned grim defiance at all the covetously inclined. Yet not on these, nor on its bolts and bars, did the bank alone rely for safety. It was never without a human guardian during those dark hours when the unlawfully disposed pursue their labours. A trustworthy person—oftener two—slept in the back-room with an armoury of weapons at the bed-head. A pistol shot in the night would be certain to bring a dozen people to the spot within the next five minutes.

All these precautions were taken chiefly as matters of form; not the remotest danger was apprehended. No attempt had ever been made upon the institution since its foundation, eighty years ago.

It was the day but one after the show—a wailing, dark, October day. Rain had fallen incessantly since dawn; a ruthless wind tore the bright autumn leaves from the trees, and flung them in the mud of the highways. Miss Lavinia found the hours dull and heavy. The Colonel's brother had departed in the morning, spite of the dreary weather; no one had run in to enliven her; Kitty was away on a visit to a friend. She was glad that night fell early. Evening might prove more cheerful than the day had been.

But what a night it was—how black, how gusty! At six o'clock one could hardly see his way along the street; by half-past, the obscurity was dense. Young Plunkett, the returned volunteer, who was the present guardian of the bank, worked cautiously along the lane to the back door, bringing up against the fence at every other step.

It was hard to find the key-hole; but after a few minutes of fumbling and rattling, the lock yielded; he went in, lit his lamp, secured the entrance, and sat down to the newspaper. It was dull reading. He had been up all the previous night at some merry-making, and the letters swam before his heavy eyes. He threw down the paper and went to bed.

Lying there he heard the wind raging, moaning, shrieking around the building; whistling through the keyhole, rattling the windows, shaking

the chimney-board. Was there any other sound? If there were, the wind masked it. He lay awhile, listening, with a drowsy sense of security and rest, which passed gradually into slumber.

The opening of a door awoke him. He had forgotten to fasten it, was his first thought, and one of the boys had come in to spend the evening. The next instant a ray from a dark-lantern streamed through the room; by the sudden light he dimly saw an unfamiliar figure. With a loud cry he sprang to his feet.

The Meredith house was quiet at an early hour that night. The servants, weary with the long, dismal day, were glad to betake themselves to bed after an hour or two of yawning by the kitchen fire. A light in the library showed them that the Colonel was still up, but Mrs. Meredith had retired at dusk with a severe headache.

Soon after their departure, she stole noiselessly downstairs. In her own room she had been busy packing up her wardrobe and every valuable that could be easily removed. Dressed for a journey, she sat down to await the working of events. The parlour was inky-dark, the air damp and chill. She shivered nervously; hope and fear by turns possessed her. If anything went wrong, she had a difficult game to play. Ten—eleven—twelve—sounded at tedious intervals from the French clock on the mantelpiece. What had happened? Still, she was, perhaps, too impatient; for such an undertaking time was needed. But when one, and at last two, had struck, she grew fearfully anxious. There must have been some terrible mischance—and what was she to do? Alone here in the darkness and the storm, what step was possible? None. She must wait, however dangerous, however fatal such delay might prove. She dared not even give way to her feverish agitation by pacing up and down the room. She could only sit motionless, with hands tightly clasped, and ear strained to catch the faintest sound. There was a light tap at the window opening on the lawn. She hurried to it. "Is it you, Philip?" she asked, in a breathless whisper.

"Yes—yes. Let me in—quick!"

"Oh, what has happened? What kept you?"

"Nothing has happened. We're all right."

"All right!" she exclaimed, in a voice of ecstasy.

"Yes; it's here, safe. But we came the nearest to missing it! We found that cub on hand when we got in—the whole place dark, and he in bed at nine! The suddenness of the thing, and the shout he gave, completely upset us for a moment. The safe, too, was a tougher job than we bargained for. If it had held out a half-hour longer, we must have dropped the whole thing, and gone off empty-handed."

"How much is it?"

"Do you think we stopped to count? Enough to keep us for a year or two. But we mustn't dally here; it is time to carry out the

rest of our arrangements. Evan is just outside. We must have the trunks down at once. There is barely time to reach the train."

A few minutes later, the loud peal of the door-bell sounded through the house. The servants awoke, startled by the unusual summons. Before they gathered courage to answer it, the Colonel himself went down. Voices were heard, and soon the errand was made known. A telegram had arrived from the telegraph office, which was open all night at Milford. Mrs. Meredith's mother was dangerously ill, and she must come immediately. And Thomas was away—not returned from his two days' furlough. The Colonel must harness the horses; no help for that. Mrs. Meredith speedily appeared, in travelling dress and cloak, and bade a hurried but kind farewell to her dependants. The trunks were taken up from the sheltering darkness outside, the Colonel mounted the box, and the carriage whirled down the gravelled sweep and out on the road towards the station.

A cloudless morning succeeded the wild night. People spoke cheerfully to each other as they went about the streets and rejoiced that the storm was over.

Towards nine o'clock, the porter came around, as usual, to the back entrance of the bank. He had no need of keys that morning. The door was open, and a large hole went through it, from side to side, through heavy plank and solid iron.

With a wild look of alarm he rushed into the office. A glance showed what had happened. Drills and crowbars lay around; the door of the vault was open; the safe was dragged out, broken into, and—empty! The poor man gazed stupefied upon the ruins.

A low groan recalled his scattered senses. He hurried to the back room, undrew the curtains of the bed, and beheld the hapless Plunkett. There he lay, blindfolded, gagged and bound—bound with an ingenuity, a complexity, which it was a work of time to undo. Aid was summoned, and his bonds were loosed, but he could tell little beyond what was known already. He remembered a brief struggle and a heavy blow; and after that no more, till he found himself in the state in which he was discovered. He could hear the burglars at their work; the hum of voices, the creaking of the floor as the heavy safe rolled out upon its castors. In what impatient agony he lay, powerless to lift voice or finger, waiting for what should happen next! He knew at last by the cessation of their blows, that the work was either successful or abandoned. Then he heard them going off, and after a long interval became aware, from the crowing of the cocks and other sounds, that morning had arrived. His liberation followed in time.

This story gave no clew to the perpetrators of the outrage. He had but a moment's glimpse at his antagonist—a large man, whose back was towards him. There was no surmise as to his identity. But if all else were doubtful, one thing was certain—the safe was empty. Sixty thousand pounds had vanished like a dream.

The news spread like wildfire through all the Milford region. Directors, bondholders and depositors poured towards the bank. Hopgrowers and dairymen, who had left the product of their sales in the keeping of the institution; rich farmers whose securities were counted by thousands; poor ones, whom a good crop last year had enabled to invest a few pounds; widows, whose sole provision for their fatherless children lay in the stolen funds; struggling mechanics or professional men, who looked to their savings for all the little comforts their families possessed. They came together—some eager, some frightened, some incredulous—to mingle inquiries and conjectures, amazements and laments. In the prevailing disorder, the holders of registered bonds alone maintained composure.

At the first word of the disaster, Miss Lavinia hurried to her friend, Mrs. Meredith; Bridget and Nora met her with accounts of the last night's summons.

"And think of her, poor dear, with her head aching fit to split, called out of her warm bed to hear such news as that," said Bridget, an Irish girl.

"Her mother was very ill, then?" asked Miss Lavinia.

"'Deed, and it's meself believes she'll not be living the morn," returned Nora, colouring the picture to suit her own fancy. "The misthress will only be in time to wake her."

"And she said nothing of when she would be back, of course?"

"Sorra word, miss. 'I shall stay till my mother is better,' she says; 'or till——' We knew what she meant, poor lady. 'My love to Miss Gray,' says she, 'and I'll write the first minute I have time.' If you get a letter, miss, you'll let us know?"

"Certainly. You are to stay in the house, then?"

"Yes, miss. 'Stay till you have word from me,' was her directions, 'and make yourselves as comfortable as you can.' Sure, she'd the kind heart for us through all her trouble, like a raal lady, as she is."

Miss Lavinia walked homeward, full of sympathy for her friend, and reckoning how many days must pass ere she could reasonably expect the promised letter. Mrs. Meredith's mother lived in the North, she knew; a whole day's journey from Milford.

Meanwhile, the excitement of the plundered community increased. To the first eager inquiries succeeded consternation, as the unmistakable calamity revealed itself; then came a hundred wild conjectures, plans and recollections. One man had heard a wagon, driven furiously, pass his house the night before, and wondered that any one could be reckless enough to plunge through the darkness at such a rate. It was at first proposed to trace this wagon, to make inquiries all along the road in that direction, and learn if any suspicious characters had been seen at any point. But investigation developed the existence of so many wagons, going furiously in so many different ways, that the project was abandoned. New plans were suggested, and in these amateur performances some valuable hours were lost.

It was afternoon when the authorities decided on their action and telegraphed to Scotland Yard for a detective officer.

The famous Mr. Buller came down, heard young Plunkett's narrative, and dismissed him; then had a little talk with the cashier.

"Is there any one in the neighbourhood that suspicion can attach to? Any one who knows the situation of the vault, the nature of the fastenings, and all that?"

"Of course. Any of our customers know—or can, if they choose; but there is not a person whom we could suspect."

"No new resident, eh? No one whose antecedents you are not familiar with?"

"Nobody—unless—why, there's the Colonel! but he is beyond suspicion."

"What colonel?"

"Colonel Meredith. Rents the handsome place you may have noticed, just east of the town. He came here in the spring."

"What is he colonel of?"

"Indeed I never thought to ask. A fine, soldierly-looking man.

"What kind of person—showy, dashing?"

"Just the reverse. Cultivates his land and goes to church."

"I should like to see him, all the same. Get him down here quietly, if you can. If not, I must have a look at him in his own house."

"Sorry I can't oblige you," said the cashier, laughing for the first time since he saw the empty safe. "Really, the idea is *too* good—the Colonel! But he is away just now."

"*Away?*"

"Yes. A telegram. Mrs. Meredith's mother is dangerously ill——"

Mr. Buller threw up both his hands. "Dolts! idiots!" he exclaimed. "A case a child might have seen into!"

"You are not very civil," said the cashier, reddening.

"It's no time for compliments. We must follow your precious Colonel, for he's the man."

"Stuff!" said the cashier, with deliberate contempt. "One of our very best men—and Mrs. Meredith sometimes plays the organ in church! You might as well suspect the parson."

"I should, if I saw cause."

"Yes—and look here. He had securities for ten thousand pounds in our safe—what do you say to that?"

"Counterfeit," no doubt.

"I hope you can convince him of it when he comes back."

Mr. Buller stayed not for further argument. Inquiry at the office speedily established the fact that no telegram had been received for Colonel Meredith. The cashier's confidence began to waver. He remembered that when the July interest was due, the Colonel had neglected to send on his coupons, having, as he said, no need for

money at the time. Before long the case was clear enough to every eye. The Merediths did not return, and Miss Lavinia had no letter. Bills poured in on every hand. The carpenters and masons had received but a small instalment of their dues, with hopes held out of liberal employment in the future; the same course had been pursued with upholsterers and furniture dealers, grocers and dairy-men. The very wages of the servants were left unpaid for weeks. Never was perfect confidence so perfectly dispelled.

Mr. Buller did his best; the whole detective machinery was set in motion. Milford people were sanguine. Ascribing superhuman sagacity to their agent, they had little doubt of recovering the whole amount, and dealing out the strictest retribution to the offenders. As time passed, and these hopes waned, they still relied upon a compromise; believed that by foregoing their just vengeance, and surrendering a portion of the spoil, they might secure the rest. But to arrange a compromise two parties are required, and the Merediths were not forthcoming. Nothing is accurately known of them to this day.

The bank went on; the vault was strengthened, and a new safe procured, on which its admirers proudly say they give any burglar leave to try his skill.

Miss Lavinia held by the Merediths to the very last moment that such adherence was possible; but there came a time when she was forced to renounce her friend, her friend's husband, and, saddest of all, her friend's brother. Fortunately, no one knew how many pleasant fancies she had built on that idea, though several sympathizing virgins condoled with her having made herself so very conspicuous the day of the flower show.

If this kind compassion mortified her, she was ere long abundantly consoled. Mr. Elwood took heart of grace and renewed his advances, which were received with all the encouragement a modest maiden should bestow. One clear winter morning, Miss Lavinia walked up the broad aisle of the church, clad in misty lace and gleaming satin, as pretty a bride as you would wish to see, and followed by a white-robed train. Mr. Elwood met her at the altar. On this occasion she was again conspicuous, and the sympathizing virgins looking on, perhaps, compassionated her as tenderly as before.

A FEW HOURS IN A BLIZZARD.

By Ada M. Trotter.

MRS. CLIFFORD and her daughter Dove lived in a flat in a comfortable, old-fashioned house in the West end of Montreal. The fact that it was an *old* house delighted Dove, she did not know why Madame, who lived below, was so ready to expatiate on the many inconveniences of an old house. Why should she know? Here was this bright little Madame, like most French Canadians, full of resources and ready to do anything for her "locataires," also Martha, Madame's little servant, who thought it an honour to be allowed to enter the flat upstairs. Nothing could have been more comfortably arranged than this same flat in the old-fashioned house.

When the water froze downstairs, poor Madame had to thaw the pipes. Send for a plumber! no, indeed. Madame despised men; they were dull, slow creatures, these men, and charged exorbitantly. There was nothing Madame could not do far better than a man.

Madame rose every morning at an early hour and noiselessly arranged the house below, thus holding herself ready at any moment to attend to the affairs of her "locataires."

The early winter of 1890 was unusually mild. Christmas Day was positively too warm to be agreeable in houses heated by stoves and furnaces. Out of doors, the snow was melting in the brilliant sunshine; the mountain lost its dazzling whiteness, and masses of snow and ice floated about the river. As yet there was no sign of a road across the St. Lawrence.

The papers were full of records of the deadly Grippe which was making its way across the continent. Isolated cases of heavy Influenza had already occurred in Montreal, but the doctors held out against calling these "The Grippe."

Then suddenly the city was stricken by the enemy. Doctors, clergymen, old and young people were among the victims, and, to intensify the miseries and dangers of the hour, the mild weather gave place to intense cold, and a travelling blizzard capped its earlier enormities by a wholesale onslaught on the province of Quebec.

Dove rose that morning with limbs weighted with lead, head aching, and eyes streaming; every symptom, in fact, of a bad attack of grippe, or influenza; but sheer fright drove all remembrance that such was the case away, and she really does not know if the disease ran its course or not. She found her mother in agonies of pain, for "the grippe" showed itself in an infinite variety of forms, and this of heart-failure was one of the most painful.

"Madame," she called, "will you run down to the grocer's and telephone for the Doctor? At once, please, dear Madame."

There was no answer ; only a harsh, metallic cough from Madame's room, and Dove ran down to find this rock of strength feeble as an infant, unable to lift her head from the pillow.

"And where was Martha ? "

"Alas ! Mademoiselle, poor Martha could not hold up her head last night. I fear she has the 'Grippe.' "

"Here's a situation," groaned Dove, as she put on her furs and went out to telephone to the doctor.

"I've been up all night," telephoned the Doctor, hoarsely ; "and I have the Grippe myself, and ought to be in bed. But I'll try and come round in the course of the morning."

Dove found the wind so high as she returned that she could hardly make way against it. The cold, too, was of the most penetrating quality ; exhausting to the vitality.

"I know it's down to zero," said Dove. "Oh, how I hate zero ! Perhaps, however, we shall feel nothing of it in our cosy flat."

Thus encouraged she struggled along, knee-deep in the snow, and was stranded by the wind in a drift at the foot of the steps ; but Dove was nothing if not active, so she clambered up the glittering mass, and slid down to the porch door.

Presently, the Doctor arrived. He was very cross ; very tired ; and his opinion was not cheerful of either invalid. He said he had about two hundred patients waiting for him ; and now here was the Blizzard to make things worse ; for it is an enemy that cannot be kept out by brick and stone ; it comes in like an icy ghost through the walls, and circulates round and round the rooms until it appears as though one stood out of doors and stoves and furnaces gave no heat. The wind was pelting the snow like hard sand against the windows, through which it sifted, though the outer panes were sealed to keep out draughts.

"It's a regular blizzard," said the Doctor. "The thermometer has been falling all night. It is ten below zero now. You must cover the windows with blankets to keep out the cold air. Keep up the temperature to 60° day and night."

The Doctor ran downstairs, darted into his sleigh, and drove up to some other one of his two hundred cases of Grippe, hardly able to hold up his head for pain.

Dove went to work with blankets, step-ladder, hammer and nails ; keeping anxious watch over the open stove where a huge fire blazed cheerily, burning in clear, red glow, as coal always does during a spell of zero weather. To her discomfiture, she found the thermometer very obstinate in clinging to the fifties, and she ran downstairs to turn on the hall stove "full drive." Then she closed all the doors except those belonging to the two invalids, and passed the day in incessant work for one or other. The afternoon was drawing to a close before she realised her very serious position. Not a soul had come to the house since the Doctor left in the morning.

She went into her room, opened the ventilating pane, and for a second looked into the street. There were no sleighs, no cars; in fact, not a human being was to be seen. The street was simply a snow-drift, and it would be an utter impossibility for Dove to get as far as the end of the block to telephone for help.

The last of the coal was now needed for the fire, and there was no one to get any more. Dove understood now why Madame abused an old-fashioned house; the coal had to be kept in a shed some twenty feet from the kitchen door. She ran downstairs to look into the hopper of the self-feeding stove; *that*, at any rate, was good for another twelve hours; but the supply upstairs was utterly exhausted.

The registering thermometer by this time indicated thirty below zero, Fahr.—*i.e.*, 58° below freezing point—a degree of cold which only the robust dare go out into and combat without exhaustion. The thermometer in the sick-room was, notwithstanding all Dove's pains, still in the fifties, and to permit the fire to go down would mean certain death to the invalid.

"Mademoiselle, where are you going?" cried Madame as Dove passed her door.

"Madame, there is no coal upstairs. I am going out to the shed."

"But Mademoiselle shall not go," cried the kind little woman. "Only wait a little moment and *I* shall go. A little patience, Mademoiselle!"

"*You* go out with bronchitis, and 30° below zero," cried Dove; "how dare you think of such a mad proceeding?"

So Dove, with the largest coal box she could find on her arm, went sturdily downstairs to the kitchen regions. A huge iron shovel lay close to the outer kitchen door; Dove set the bucket down for a moment beside it. This meant a little pause to get up her courage, for the roar of the wind and the swirl of the blinding snow would have daunted a stronger heart than hers, even if braced up by a vigorous physique. Dove knew from sad experience that she must inevitably freeze at so low a record as 30° below zero; and then how was she to stand up in a storm such as this?

"It's got to be done," said Dove, grimly. "I dare say it is not half so bad as it looks."

She pulled the fur cap close over her ears, tied a woollen cloud over her face to protect eyes and nose, and pulled the heavy arctics over her boots. There was no further excuse for a moment's pause, so she grasped the bolt of the door and slid it back.

The wind tore the door so furiously from her hand that poor Dove, after an effort at balance, found herself, bucket, spade and all, in a drift beside the threshold. Now it is a very easy matter to fall *into* a drift, but it requires judgment to assist one to get out of it, as struggling to rise merely sends one deeper into the snow bank. But here the bucket stood a friend in need; Dove rose on its firm basis,

and took a step onwards. Fortunately the snow was wind-driven towards the fence, and therefore not more than two feet deep on the path between the kitchen and the shed.

"Just my luck," said Dove, apt to consider herself fortunate in small things; so she struggled valiantly along, with the iron spade for a staff and the bucket for balance. The situation to any but the robust was one of danger—for the blast of the blizzard is deadly in its icy penetration; the snow, swept onwards by its wide-spreading wings, cuts like a knife; and in turning her back on it in order to take breath, Dove found her garments extemporised into sails, which drove her towards the snow-bank by the fence, where she must have perished. Well, it is hardly romantic to owe one's life to a bucket and a heavy iron spade, but Dove knows well how much was due to these humble friends during that struggle for existence, between the kitchen and the shed-door.

This door, somewhat sunken, was choked with fine snow, and frozen so that it would not give space to a midge to enter. Dove, breathless but valiant, set the bucket down, and taking the spade as a battering-ram, plunged against the rickety door. It gave way at the hinges and came down with a clatter. Meantime the bucket had settled into the snow and was frozen there; when it was at length dug out, the bottom was so humpy with lumps of ice that it could not be induced to stand, and the coal that Dove laboriously shovelled in tumbled out in a manner that would have exasperated a saint. By this time another calamity threatened her—feet and hands were numbed, and, unless she could speedily get up the circulation, would undoubtedly freeze.

What happened in the next few minutes remains ever a kind of nightmare, of working against impossibilities; but the next thing she distinctly remembers was the weight of the bucket, which she had to carry with both hands and set down at every step. The minutes seemed hours, and when the outer kitchen was reached at last, Dove was gasping for breath, as one half-drowned. Her hair was blown down and twisted into the cloud, as though a mischievous hand had tied it perversely into snarls. Her eyelids were frozen, so that she had to wait until the water thawed and rolled away like a tear before she could bolt the door again, and rid herself of the heavy arctics.

After this came another season of struggle, between three flights of stairs and the weight of the bucket in unaccustomed arms.

"I've done it," at last said Dove to herself, as she sat on the top stair, looking lovingly at the well-filled box beside her. Then she went back to her invalid.

It was an awful night; the blizzard increased in fury, and by seven o'clock in the morning the bucket was again empty. Exhausted by the night's watching, Dove contemplated another visit to the shed with horror; she feared that she could never get through the twelve hours' accumulation of snow. What was to be done? Again she

opened the pane and looked into the street. If only the milkman would appear! he was one of the kindest men in the world, and would do anything to serve her. But it would be hours before the milkman could break the track and come in over the country roads. Nor could Dove go into the street; the snow had drifted half-way up the house door. It was a regular blockade. "May God give me strength," prayed Dove fervently, as she took the bucket in her hand and began to roll herself up in furs and wraps.

At that very moment came a sound of stamping outside. Then a kind of earthquake shook the house; this was caused by the wrenching open of the outside door, frozen in the intense cold. Then the door bell rang.

Dove had flown downstairs at the first sound, and now precipitated herself into the arms of the rosy, fur-clothed monster, who stood shaking the dry snow pellets from his clothes.

"Jack! oh, Jack! whatever made you come so early?"

"Oh, I've been all night in the train; it's stuck fast a mile or two away. We were all so hungry that we ate up everything."

"But *how* did you get here?"

"I chartered an old habitant to bring me. I haven't been home yet. I've been bothered all night thinking perhaps Madame and Martha would get the grippe, and you might be left without coal in this blizzard."

This was the second time that Dove had unconsciously brought this brother to her aid at a crisis. The first time he broke his journey and travelled a hundred miles because he was awakened during the night by her voice calling him, his arrival home being as opportune as on this second occasion. But, psychology apart, now see the cheer this rosy-cheeked, healthy Hercules has brought to the flat. What a rattling and banging of stoves! How he sends the ashes flying all over the dainty rooms in his zeal! How he carries coal, too, until he's as black as a coalheaver, and has to perform an elaborate toilet before he is presentable again!

"I say, Dove, that box is too heavy to carry up three flights when it is full," he remarked, as he lifted it into place by the stove.

"I know," said Dove meekly. "I did it yesterday."

"*You* did! However did you get to the shed in the blizzard?"

"I don't know. It was horrid, and I froze my toes again."

"Horrid! I wonder you are alive to tell the story. *That* comes of living in an old-fashioned house, with no man to look after things. I told——"

But he never finished his sentence, for Dove made a sudden friendly assault upon him, under which, man-like, he went down.

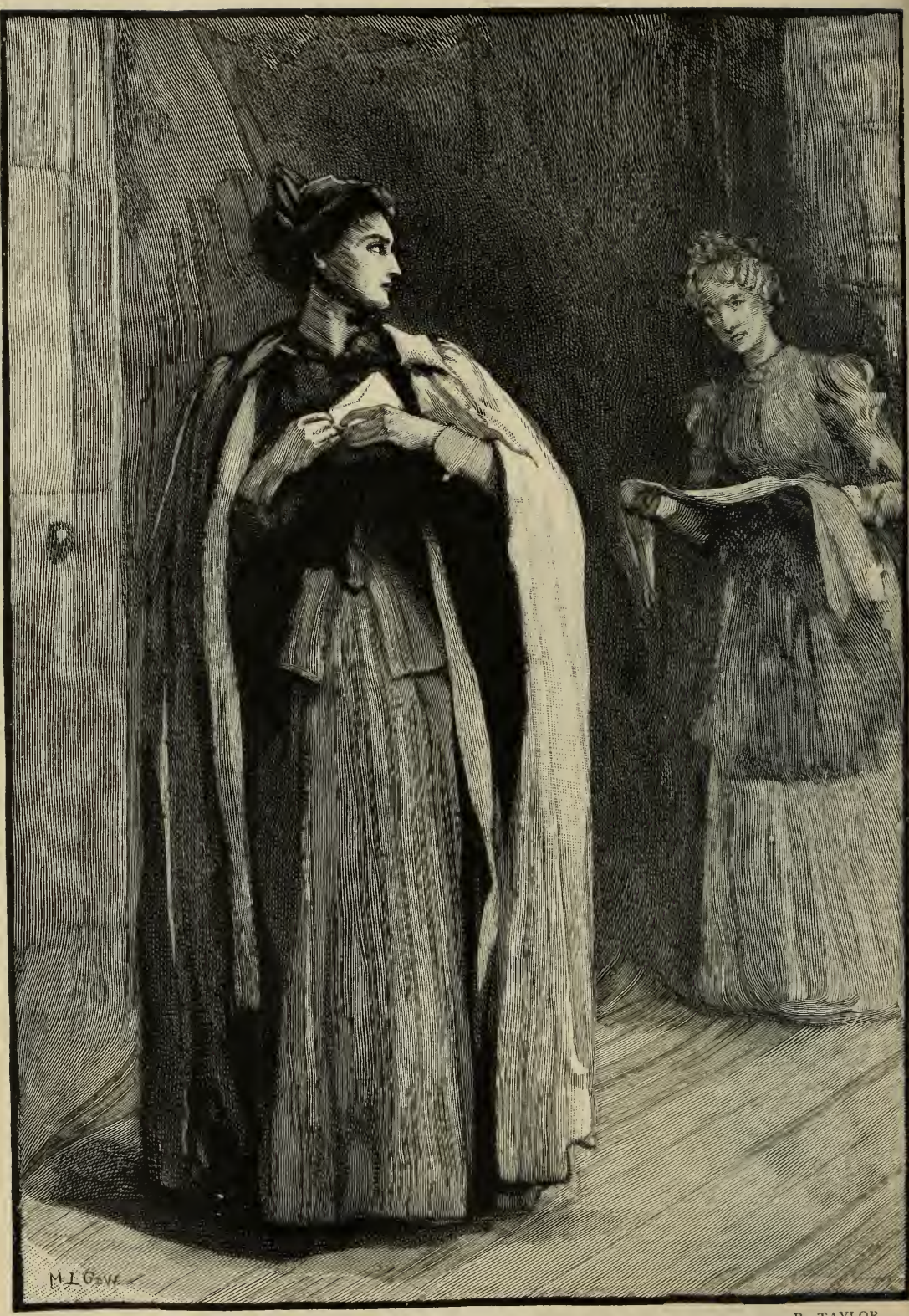
A CHRISTMAS VOICE.

Oh, the merry, merry bells of Christmas!
Hark! hark! do you hear them ring?
And the merry, merry Christmas carols,
Do you hear the children sing?
And the winsome, blithesome, bonny lasses,
Do you see their smiling eyes?
And the shining of their silken raiment,
And their cheeks' carnation dyes?

Ah, the city's face is smiling, smiling also,
And the city's heart is glad.
And the city's lights are gaily, gaily shining,
And the world with mirth runs mad.
But I hear an undertone of wailing,
From hearths where Christmas never goes;
Ringing up, up to the bending Heaven—
The story of the poor man's woes.

"Food, or we perish, oh, our brothers!
For the love of Heaven give us bread!
Say your grace and eat your Christmas dinners,
Let the wine of your feasts be red—
But the grace shall bring a curse instead of blessing
If it goes up mingled with our cries;
If no human ear will hear our pleadings,
They shall echo to the far-off skies.

"Shall wives and weans lie starving at your thresholds,
Dying there for lack of fire and food?
Are they not Heaven's children too, my fellow Christians?
They are human flesh and blood.
Oh, the Father's hand has not been shortened,
And His vision is not dim;
If your needy brothers perish at your gateways,
You shall answer unto Him!"



M L GOW R. TAYLOR.

FROM THAT MOMENT HER PUNISHMENT BEGAN.

THE ARGOSY.

FEBRUARY, 1892.

ASHLEY.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER II.

THE BUTTERFLY CHASE.

NEW YEAR'S-DAY, frosty, bright and cold: just the day for a sharp walk on the hard country roads, giving a healthy glow to the blood and to the face, very agreeable in midwinter. A gentleman, who was winding up a slight ascent in a picturesque part of England, appeared to find it so. He marched along with a hearty step, aided by a right good will and a stout stick. His face was browned, as by foreign travel; he was no longer young, and he stopped, almost incessantly, to note various points in the landscape, with a curiosity which seemed to say the locality was strange to him.

Not entirely strange, but it was thirty years since he had witnessed it. Presently, as he came to two roads, he halted in indecision: and no wonder, for one of them had been made recently. "Can you tell me, sir," he inquired of another passenger, who now overtook him, "which of these two roads will take me to Ashley?"

"To the house or to the village?"

"The house. Sir Harry's."

"This one to the left. I am going there myself." He was a little, spare man, rising forty, with a red, good-humoured face. An ample blue cloak covered his person, nearly to the feet, which were clad in dress-boots, black and shining. As they walked on together, a carriage came bowling along behind them. Its inmates appeared to be richly attired.

"That makes the fourth carriage which has passed me this afternoon," cried the bronzed stranger. "Are they bound for Ashley, do you know?"

"To be sure," returned the little man. "To-day is a grand day with Sir Harry Ashley. The christening of his son and heir."

"Why, what do you mean?" uttered the other. "I thought Sir Harry and his wife were childless."

"They were until—let me see—just three months ago. On the 1st of last October, I introduced their son into the world."

"You!" exclaimed the stranger, halting and gazing at his companion. "You cannot be Josiah Gay?"

"I am Josiah Gay's son. My father has been dead these twelve years. And I stand in his place, the village Esculapius."

"Then you must he young Jos!"

"No, poor Jos is gone also. I am Ned. But you have the advantage of me."

"I suppose so. A residence in a hot climate plays old Harry with one's looks. And, otherwise, you would not remember me, for you were an urchin in pinafores when I left. Your brother might, were he alive. He and I and Harry Ashley—reckless Hal!—have had many a spree together; robbed more orchards, and done more midnight damage, than I should care to tell of, now. To think of Hal Ashley, the third son, coming into the title before he was 'six-and-twenty.'"

"Perhaps you are Philip Hayne? Mr. Hayne."

"Major Hayne, at your service," returned the other, raising his hat, and disclosing a head nearly bald. "Thirty years have I served the East India Company, and only got my majority to retire upon. Well, well; we should be thankful for small mercies in this life; and I have neither chick nor child."

"Wish I could say the same," cried Mr. Gay, drawing his good-humoured face into a comical expression. "I count ten, and there may be ten more behind 'em, for ought I know."

"All of us to our tastes," returned the Major. "If I had half the number I should run away the first wet morning. Another carriage! two! They are coming thick and threefold. By the way, though, what has Lady Ashley been about, to keep Sir Harry out of an heir twenty or thirty years, and then give him one at last?"

"Twenty or thirty years! Oh, I see; you are thinking of the late Lady Ashley. Sir Harry lost his first wife four or five years ago. This is his second."

"Whew!"

"Last autumn three years he married this one. She was a girl of twenty, his ward, too young for him. And he may thank luck, more than anything else, that he has an heir at all."

"Ah?"

"She is of wilful temper, violent to a degree. Three several times have there been hopes of a child, and the expectations have always been destroyed from some imprudent conduct on my lady's part. Once, it was through a fit of raging passion. When she ought to sit still, she will go galloping out on horseback, for a day at a stretch; and when told that exercise is necessary to her, she will not take it, but lounge on a sofa from week's end to week's end. However, the child is born."

"Whose nose does it put out of joint? Somebody's, of course."

"Have you forgotten Ryle Ashley? Sir Harry's next brother."

"Not I. I never forget anybody, or anything: man, child, horse, dog."

"Ryle Ashley's gone: died the same year as poor Jos. His eldest son, Arthur, was then the heir. Sir Harry brought him up at Ashley to all the expectation."

"And this young shaver cuts him out! Very annoying to him, no doubt, but there are worse misfortunes at sea. Had I a score of boys, I would rather see them carve out their own fortunes than inherit one ready made. What sort of a genus is Arthur? Has his wits about him?"

"Clever and keen as was Ryle, his father. And he had the brains of the family. Arthur Ashley will rise in the political world, if he minds what he is about. There is a talk of his going into the House for some close borough. He has been secretary to one of the ministers these three years."

"Better for him than waiting for Ashley. I should like to see him."

"He arrived here to-day at mid-day: I saw him as he passed through the village. He is come to stand to the new heir. Lady Pope is outrageous, I hear, that they have not asked her to be godmother. But she and Lady Ashley do not hit it off together. She has been but once at Ashley since Sir Henry's second marriage, and left in a rage at the end of the third day: some breeze between her and the new lady."

"Who is Lady Pope?"

"Sir Harry's sister. Formerly Bessy Ashley. A widow now."

"What! did she marry? Why, she was nearly an old maid when I left."

"She married twice. A Captain Rivers the first time, Sir Ralph Pope the second. Here we are! The house is not changed. By-the-way, though, Major Hayne, how came you here on foot? Where from?"

"The railway station. Stopton. I hate your close flys, and your omnibuses, and I have not learned idleness abroad—as too many do. I purpose going over the Continent on foot, when I have said How-d'ye-do to what old friends I can muster in England. Rather an unseasonable moment to break in upon Sir Henry: but he will not mind that, if he is what plain Hal Ashley used to be."

Not a whit altered in heart and hospitality, only in years. He grasped Major Hayne's hands with a delight he did not attempt to hide; and when the latter put forth his travelling attire, as a plea for not attending the august ceremonies of the day, Sir Harry laughed at the idea of so frivolous an excuse. He linked his friend's arm within his, and proudly paraded him before his assembled guests in the saloon. "The old friend of my early years," he said to them;

"the closest friend I ever could boast of. Lauretta," Sir Harry continued, as they halted before a young, dark, handsome lady, "this is Major Hayne, the companion of my youth.'"

"A fine woman," whispered the Major. "Who is she?"

The Baronet smiled. "Your coming has turned my head," he replied; "it was an introduction all on one side. I should have said, My wife, Lady Ashley."

And now, the circuit of the room passed, the Major drew aside. Sir Harry went forward to receive other guests, and the stranger made good use of his eyes. It was his custom. He was regarding a gentleman who had just come in, and whose appearance particularly attracted his attention. A young, elegant-looking man, with a large proportion of intellect stamped on his well-shaped head and expansive brow. But, as Major Hayne looked, he suddenly, in the fair complexion, the grey eye, and the handsome features, detected a resemblance to the Ashley family.

"Ryle's son! It must be! the disappointed heir! I'll go and speak to the lad."

He did so, laying his hand upon the young man's shoulder. "Unless I am much mistaken, you are your father's son."

Arthur Ashley wheeled round. But there was a quaintness in the stranger's smile, an affectionate regard in his eye, which won his favour. Where could he have sprung from, this brown, travel-soiled man, with his unsuitable attire?

"I am the son of Ryle Ashley," Arthur said.

"And Ryle Ashley was the partner in my boyish scrapes. Not so entirely as your Uncle Hal: but we have had many a wild frolic together. I was ringleader, for Ryle was a year or two my junior. So he, poor fellow, is gone, I find, and I am left, well and hearty. Should it ever be your fate, Ryle, to try your luck under a smoking sun, adhere strictly to temperance and simplicity of living. That is the secret which has scared away ailments from me"

"I am not Ryle, sir, I am Arthur Ashley."

"Ay, yes. I knew it. But your face is what your father's was, when I went away, and I dreamt I was talking to Ryle again."

"I think you must be Captain Hayne," said Arthur, who had been ransacking his memory.

"With another step in rank tacked on to it. The captain has subsided into major. But, as we are on the subject of rank, how do you bear the loss of yours?"

"I have lost none."

"The anticipation. You were Sir Harry's heir."

"Why, do you know," returned Arthur, becoming animated and speaking in a confidential tone, "I am glad of it now. With Ashley in prospective, there is too much fear that I should have frittered away my days; have led a life of indolence, as Sir Harry does. With the necessity for exertion, came the exertion; and the love of it.

I would not exchange my present life—and I can assure you it is no sinecure—for the renewed heirship of Ashley."

"You'll do—Ryle the second," cried Major Hayne.

The christening was over, and they sat around the banquet-table. A goodly group. Lady Ashley, in her young beauty, at its head, Sir Henry, with his fifty years, at its foot. Nabob Call and Arthur Ashley, the child's godfathers, sat on Lady Ashley's either hand; the Nabob a surly old East Indian, peppery in his temper as his favourite diet, capsicums and cayenne. It had been a marvel to the gossips that Arthur Ashley, a younger branch of the family, and a man without county influence, should have been fixed upon to stand to the child, when so many, far above him in position, would have been proud to render the service to their old friend Sir Henry Ashley. Lady Ashley chose the sponsors. How little did they think, who sat around her that day, and marked the ready smiles on her face, the courteous attention to her guests, the witty repartee which ever and anon rose to her lips—how little did they think, that hatred and revenge towards one of those sponsors was the ruling thought of her life! She had once loved Arthur Ashley, Sir Harry's presumptive heir, with all the passion of a warm and ill-regulated heart. When she arrived from India, the self-willed Lauretta Carnagie, they had been thrown much together: Mr. Ashley paid her more attention than he ought to have done—perhaps strove to gain her love, who knows?—and when he had gained it, whether intentionally or not, she discovered that he was playing with her, for he was the promised husband of another. Not from *love* did she then hasten to become Sir Harry Ashley's wife, but that Arthur might be bowled out of the succession. Three years, and her hopes had come to naught—three years of feverish impatience: but now her revenge was gratified, *her* child was the heir to Ashley. And when Sir Harry had thanked her for naming his nephew (whom he had not thought of) as one of the heir's sponsors, she broke into a harsh, wild laugh: but she did not tell her husband that it was with the view of giving pain and mortification to Mr. Ashley that she had brought him to be present at the christening of the child who was his supplanter.

With the dessert, the infant was brought in. The nurse made the circuit of the table with him. He lay in her arms, asleep, a bundle of embroidery, whose face might have been composed of lace and white ribbon, for all else that could be seen of it.

The gentlemen charged the glasses to the brim, and the company rose. "Long life to Carnagie Call, the heir to Ashley!" Not one drank it more heartily than he who stood at Lady Ashley's left hand, the supplanted inheritor. There lingered, in truth, no regret on his mind, and that revengeful lady little knew Arthur Ashley.

"*What* did they name the child?" whispered Major Hayne to his next-door neighbour, a lively young lady of thirty, when the applause was over.

"Carnagie Call."

"Carnagie Call! Is that English or Dutch?"

Lady Maria laughed. "Perhaps it is Hindustanee. She was a Miss Carnagie, of Madras, and Nabob Call has passed his life there. The child is named after them."

Somewhat later, the nurse was sitting before the nursery fire, undressing the infant, when the door softly opened and Lady Maria Kerrison came in. "How d'ye do, Eliza?" she said. "I have come to see this prodigy of a child." It may be explained that the nurse had been children's-maid to Lady Maria's young half-sisters, and the Countess of Kerrison (the earl's second wife) wishing to part with her, had strongly recommended her to Lady Ashley. The servant rose and placed a chair for Lady Maria, if she chose to sit, but she stood looking at the child.

A miserable little infant, as brown as a berry, long, half-starved arms and legs, a scowl on its dark brow, and a whining cry that was rarely still. It was whining piteously now.

"Eliza!" uttered the young lady in the surprise of the moment, "what a frightful child! It is a perfect scarecrow."

"I call it quite an object," replied the nurse. "What with its lanky limbs and thin body, it looks all legs and wings."

"It is like its mother, though," said Lady Maria, attentively regarding the face.

"An ugly likeness, my lady. It will never have her good looks. But there's one thing it is like her in," added the servant, dropping her voice, as if fearful the walls should hear, "and that's in temper."

"Will it live, do you think, Eliza?"

"I should say not. Though sometimes these skeletons of children fill out and ——"

Eliza ceased speaking, for who should sail into the room but Lady Ashley, Mrs. Call, and the Countess of Kerrison, the child's godmother.

"A beautiful infant!" rapturously cried Mrs. Call, who had a great aversion to children, and had never yet been able to distinguish one from another. "You ought to be proud of your charge, nurse?"

"I am, ma'am. It is a perfect love, as I often tell my lady. And got its mamma's eyes."

"Nana says I was like it when I was a child," broke in Lady Ashley to Mrs. Call. "Do you think I was?"

"Very much so," promptly replied Mrs. Call, not, however, having the slightest recollection on the subject.

The whole of this time the child was moaning its piteous moan, and the visitors turned to leave the room. The Countess of Kerrison lingered for a moment.

"Does it get enough to eat, Eliza? I never saw so thin a child."

"It eats enough for two, my lady."

"And the more it eats, the thinner it becomes," interposed Lady Maria. "Eliza says it's all bones and feathers."

"Bones and feathers!" echoed Lady Kerrison. "*Feathers!*"

"Oh, Lady Maria!" uttered the servant, "I never said so. I said all legs and wings."

"Legs and wings, that was it!" laughed Lady Maria. "I knew it was something that made me think of birds. Good night, Eliza. I wish you more luck with the young gentleman."

Arthur Ashley stood in the drawing room, his cup of coffee in his hand, talking to Lady Maria Kerrison. His uncle came up and drew him apart.

"I have had no time to ask you anything, Arthur. You should have managed to get here before to-day."

"I could not. Lady Pope ——"

"I know, I know," hastily interrupted Sir Harry, as if there were something in the subject he wished to avoid. "Has anything been decided about your marriage? Anna will be tired of waiting."

Arthur Ashley was about to answer, when he perceived that Lady Ashley was standing close to him on the other side, listening. "I have other things to think of," he shortly said, and moved forward to take Lady Maria Kerrison's cup.

But the following morning, when they were alone, he himself introduced the subject to his uncle. "I have been thinking—and Anna—that if all goes well till the end of summer, we shall try our luck together. What with one source and another, I make out seven or eight hundred a year, and it is of no use waiting. Anna is willing to risk it."

"Enough to begin upon," said Sir Harry; "more than I and my wife had, before Ashley unexpectedly dropped in. But why could you not have told me of this last night, when I asked you about it."

"One does not like to speak of such things in a crowded drawing-room," was Arthur Ashley's evasive reply. How could he tell his uncle that a feeling of delicacy towards *her*, who, he had reason to believe, had once passionately loved him, prevented his speaking of his own marriage in her presence—although she had long been the wife of another.

Sir Henry Ashley sat one morning alone. It was nearly mid-day, but his wife, adhering to the idle habits of her Eastern childhood, rarely rose till late. Four years had passed since the christening of the heir—and he was the heir still. A sickly, unhappy-looking little wight, as brown and thin as ever, but possessing a most precocious mind. As the clock struck twelve, Lady Ashley entered with her two children, Carnagie, and his fair and lovely little sister, Blanche. The little ones were dressed to go out.

"This is quite a spring day, so warm for March," observed Lady Ashley. "I am going to send the children down to Linden, and let them dine there."

"Oh," screamed out young Carnagie, "I like Linden. I can make as much noise as I like there."

"Make the most of it to-day, then, my boy," cried Sir Henry. "It will be about your last chance. They must take their farewell of Linden," he added to his wife; "I have received a letter from Arthur this morning."

"What have Arthur Ashley's letters to do with our children?" demanded Lady Ashley, in no pleasant tone.

"A great deal, so far as Linden goes. Arthur and his wife are coming to live at it themselves."

Lady Ashley's eyes flashed fire. "Coming to live at Linden!" she exclaimed. "And will you permit it?"

"I have no authority in the matter," returned Sir Harry Ashley. "Linden belongs to Arthur."

"I don't care who it belongs to," was the intemperate rejoinder of his lady. "Linden has always been ours, to use for the benefit of our children, and it shall remain so still."

Sir Harry began to whistle: rather a favourite amusement of his. He never would quarrel with his wife, and it was his great resource when she spoke in terms of provocation—as she frequently did.

"How dare Arthur Ashley interfere with our arrangements?" she began again.

"My dear, do be reasonable," urged Sir Harry: "you know the circumstances as well as I do. Linden was a pretty, unpretending little place in my father's time, as it is now, jutting upon the edge of the park, and when its proprietor offered it for sale, my father was too glad to buy it. Of course we all thought he intended it to go with the estate, but he left it to Lady Pope, who was not married then. I believe Sir Arthur made her give a sort of promise that it should not eventually be separated from Ashley. However, she has willed it to Arthur, and there's an end of it."

"Linden was ours," fiercely retorted Lady Ashley. "Who says it was your sister's?"

"Why, Lauretta, you knew it was hers! you must have heard so fifty times. I only rented it from her."

"I did not hear it, I did not know it. What have I to do with the details of the estate?"

"Well," coldly returned Sir Harry, "when Lady Pope died, last November, I informed you of the contents of her will, upon my return from the funeral, and that Linden was bequeathed to Arthur. I am sure I thought you would be delighted to hear that Arthur and Mrs. Ashley were coming to Linden. I went there this morning, after breakfast, to see about some alterations he wants made, and it was running in my head, all the way there and back what an agreeable companion Anna would be for you. I cannot say, though, but I am surprised at Arthur's fixing on Linden as a residence. In the first place, the house is small; in the second, I don't well see

how he will get on with his parliamentary matters, so far away from town."

Lady Ashley did not immediately answer. This place, Linden, had been used by Sir Henry, for many years, as the dairy-farm, and Lady Ashley had been in the frequent habit of sending her two children, with their attendants, to the house for the whole day. She imagined that the change and the exercise were of benefit to Carnagie; and, besides, the noise of children at home waged perpetual war with her nerves.

"If you do not stop Arthur Ashley's coming, you have no love for your own children," she resumed, in a voice of concentrated passion. Her husband laughed.

"Lauretta, don't be childish. Arthur has announced his determination to reside at Linden, and it is not possible for me to interfere, even by a hint. Our children will do as well without Linden as with it. And they can go there sometimes: Arthur's young ones will be rare playmates for them."

"My children shall never mix with Arthur Ashley's," she retorted, with a pale, determined lip.

"Never mix with Arthur Ashley's!" repeated Sir Henry in astonishment. "What do you mean, Lauretta?"

"Never. For I hate him, and all who belong to him."

Sir Henry put on his hat, with a sigh, and went out: he saw she was going into one of her unmanageable humours. Poor Sir Harry Ashley! He had found his sister's temper, when she ruled at Ashley, inimical to his comfort, but he had scarcely changed for the better, in that respect, when he made Lauretta Carnagie his wife.

Not until July did Mr. and Mrs. Ashley arrive at Linden. It took some months to put the place in order for them, and Arthur could not leave town sooner. He wrote M.P. to his name now, and was the right hand, under the rose, of Lord Swaytherealm, the greatest man in the Lower House. Sir Harry was there to welcome them, but not Lady Ashley. On the following Sunday afternoon, however, the two families met together, near the secluded cottage of Watson the gamekeeper. Watson's mother, an old woman of five-and-seventy, was sunning herself outside, on the bench, when Mr. and Mrs. Ashley and their eldest child came up. Mrs. Ashley, a very affable young woman, but just now in delicate health, sat down by her side, glad of the rest. Almost at the same moment, Sir Henry Ashley, his wife, and Master Carnagie also appeared in view.

"Do you remember me, Hannah?" inquired Mrs. Ashley.

Of course not, at first, for old Hannah was getting dim of sight, and had not seen her for several years.

"You remember me?" interposed Arthur.

"Remember you, Master Arthur!" reiterated old Hannah; "I must forget myself before I forget you."

"Well—this lady is my wife. And you know I married Anna Rivers. She was a favourite of yours, in days gone by."

The old woman's face lighted up with intelligence, and, when the bustle occasioned by the greeting of Sir Henry and Lady Ashley had subsided, she beckoned forward the little boy by Mrs. Ashley's side.

"What do they ca' ye, my bonny bairn?" she inquired.

He was a gentle child of three years, with the fair curls and bright Saxon features of the Ashley race. When he was made to comprehend the question—for though it was fifty years since old Hannah came to Ashley, she had never entirely abandoned her Scotch tongue—he answered timidly.

"Ryle Ashley."

"Then tak' care o' yoursel', my bairn: tak' gude care o' him, Miss Anna," she added, looking at Mrs. Ashley, "for as sure as ye all stan' round me, he'll be one day the Chief o' Ashley."

"You are mistaking the children," interrupted Lady Ashley, in a cold, proud tone, as she pushed forward Carnagie towards Hannah. "This is Sir Harry's son, the heir to Ashley."

"Nae, nae, my leddy," she answered, laying her hand with a fond, pitying gesture upon little Carnagie's straight black hair, "he's no born to be the inheritor of Ashley. Have ye nae heard the tradition, that there's only three names that can inherit Ashley? Arthur, Henry and Ryle; each name in its ain proper turn, and nae to supersede the other: have ye nae heard it? Sir Harry kens well that it has always been so. Sir Harry, why did you nae name your son Ryle?"

Shades of anger, perplexity and deep, deep paleness, passed over Lady Ashley's dark face. Sir Harry had proposed that name for his son; urged it; but she, in her strong self-will, had insisted on calling the child Carnagie. "Ryle was the name of my favourite brother, Arthur's father," he had said. The more reason had persisted Lady Ashley, for its not being given to *her* child.

Sir Harry laughed now, jokingly at old Hannah. "We have come to days of enlightenment, Hannah," he said, "and have done with ghosts and traditions. Sir Carnagie Ashley will do for the nineteenth century."

Hannah shook her head. "Ye ken weel, Sir Harry, that once, when ye were a random lad o' nineteen, ye fell into an unlucky scrape. Nothing but money would get ye out of it, and that ye had nae got, and ye did nae dare to tell your father, Sir Arthur. I could nae help ye, but I told ye to keep a good heart, for that you would surely come some time to be the laird o' Ashley. I told ye that Henry came next to Arthur in the succession, and Ryle after that, and then it went back to Arthur again. You laughed at me; for ye had two brothers older than you were, fine, healthy youths, and likely to live. But in a few years ye found that I had told ye truth. You should ha' named your boy Ryle."

"We will name the next so," was the baronet's good-humoured reply.

"Ye may never have another. But I think ye are mocking at me, Sir Harry, as ye did in your young days. What did I tell you, Mr. Arthur, amaist half a score year agone?" she continued, turning to Mr. Ashley. "It was the day ye sheltered in here from the thunder-storm ye mind, when ye were wearing the mourning fresh for your father. Ye were saying ye would do this to the estate, and ye would do that, when it was yours. Do ye mind, now, what I said to ye?"

"To be sure!" cried Arthur, humouring the old lady. "You told me not to count upon Ashley, for that to succeed Sir Harry I should have been named Ryle, and that if no Ryle arose to succeed him, the title would lapse."

"I thought it would lapse," she went on. "When Mr. Ryle, your father, died in Sir Harry's lifetime, I thought nothing else but that it would lapse with Sir Harry. But now there's another Ryle arisen in your son. Is that why ye named him so, Mr. Arthur?"

"No!" almost fiercely interrupted Arthur. "I named him Ryle in remembrance of my father. I truly hope Sir Harry's own children may succeed him."

"My bairn," said the old woman, taking little Ryle's hand in hers, who had stood quietly at her knee, looking into her wrinkled face with his clear blue eyes, "when ye are a great man and are called Sir Ryle, perhaps ye may have a little boy of your ain. Mind what I say to ye, *name him Arthur*, and dinna forget it. If ye are alive still, Miss Anna—and it is to be hoped ye will be for many a year after that—see that it is done."

"I think you are fanciful," said Mrs. Ashley to the old lady, in a good-natured, but disbelieving tone, as if she would not combat too rudely her curious prejudices. "What difference can a name make in the succession to Ashley? The thing is not possible."

"We don't see why such things should be and such not, Miss Anna; these matters are beyond our ken. I could tell you stranger things that run in families than this, but I could nae tell ye why they run; no, nor their ain selves, nor their kith nor kin: and we may plan and we may talk, but they can nae be turned aside. Sir Harry kens, and Sir Arthur kenned it afore him, that none but those three names, each in its turn, have ever been the lairds o' Ashley—nae matter how improbable, at one time, their succession may have seemed."

"If you intend to remain here, Sir Harry, I shall take my leave," interposed Lady Ashley, in a suppressed tempest of passion.

They all walked away, Sir Harry and his nephew making merry over old Hannah's solemn belief in the infallibility of a name. To give an instant's serious thought to such "trash"—Sir Harry's expression—would have been injurious to the dignity of all the Ashleys.

Yet what the old woman had stated was an incontrovertible fact—that since the creation of the baronetcy, two hundred years before, the holders of it had been Arthur, Henry, Ryle, Arthur, Henry, Ryle, in succession down to the present date. The two children walked together on the grass. They presented a complete contrast: the one, lowering and sullen in countenance, dark as his own nature, the other all smiles and good humour. Lady Ashley repeatedly called Carnagie, as if she would detach him from little Ryle, but Carnagie had inherited his mother's self-will, and declined to listen.

"What are you going to do with yourself to-morrow?" demanded Sir Harry of his nephew.

"I intend to have a day's fishing. There used to be capital trout in the stream. Do you ever trouble them?"

"Not I. I see no fun in the sport. If——"

A sharp cry, as of pain, interrupted them, and they looked round for the children. Carnagie Ashley, whose ire had been raised by something which he could not himself explain, was beating Ryle unmercifully.

"Hallo!" cried Mr. Ashley. "Carnagie! What beat a boy less than yourself!"

"Carnagie!" shouted Sir Harry; "have done, sir! Carnagie!"

It was of no use to call. Carnagie, in his fury, could not hear. The little child was screaming, as much from terror as from pain, for the blood was falling from his nose on to his handsome dress, but Carnagie still hit on. Mr. Ashley, who was up with them quicker than his uncle, seized Carnagie by the waist, and deposited him a few yards off, where he stamped and screamed. Sir Harry stormed at him, but Lady Ashley stood as immovable as a statue, looking at her son with intense satisfaction. Politeness kept Mr. and Mrs. Ashley from saying what they thought of Master Carnagie, and the parties separated for their different homes.

"Don't you allow that old creature a pension?" inquired Lady Ashley of her husband, as they walked towards Ashley. "Hannah Watson?"

"Yes."

"Then discontinue it."

"Out of my power, Lady Ashley. My father commenced it before his death, and left the charge to me. It is a sacred trust."

"She ought to be turned off the estate. How dared she insult us to our faces—saying that Carnargie would never succeed you?"

"For pity's sake don't let that trouble you," returned Sir Harry, laughing heartily. "Old Hannah was always full of her Scotch superstitions: she would make you believe in second sight, if you would listen to her. As worthy a woman, she, as ever lived, and was of quite a superior family, though she lowered herself by marrying my father's gamekeeper. I wish, Lauretta," he added more seriously, "you would go occasionally amongst the people on the estate: I think you might find it of advantage to you."

"The specimen I have met to-day has not been an inviting one," was the repellent reply of Lady Ashley.

Mr. Ashley sat broiling himself upon the edge of the trout stream, and, by his side, quiet as a mouse, sat little Ryle. Ere long, Sir Henry Ashley, holding Carnagie by the hand, came behind them. Ryle, who could not forget yesterday, shrank close to his father.

"What sport, Arthur?"

"Not any, yet. I had letters to write to-day, and did not come as soon as I thought of doing. There's a bite! hush! stop!"

There really was, the first bite. It was a poor little trout, not worth the landing, but Mr. Ashley secured him, almost with the delight of a schoolboy. It was nearly two years since he had enjoyed a day's fishing, and then not for trout. Carnagie and Ryle watched the process with interest. When Mr. Ashley threw his line into the water again, Sir Harry prepared to leave.

"I want to stay," said Master Carnagie.

"You cannot, Carnagie. I must take you home."

"Let him stay if you like," interposed Arthur. I'll take care of him. Provided," he added, turning to young Carnagie, "he promises to sit still and does not quarrel."

"No, I believe I must take him," rejoined Sir Harry. "His mother will find fault with me if I do not."

He walked away, dragging by the hand the unwilling boy, who kept his head turned round in the direction of the stream. When they came to the park, where the trees would shut out all view of it, Carnagie's feet became glued to the ground, and he sobbed out that he *would* go back to see the fish caught.

"The fish are ugly," said Sir Harry.

Carnagie's sobs increased to a roar; and Sir Harry, never famed for his resolution, yielded. "Well, run back," he said, "and sit down close to little Ryle. I will send Patience to fetch you presently. And hark ye, Carnagie—if you are troublesome to Mr. Ashley, or ill-natured to Ryle, I will never let you stay anywhere again."

Not waiting for a second permission, the boy darted straight back towards Mr. Ashley. Sir Harry watched him half-way across the plain, then turned, entered the park and was lost to view. At the same moment, Carnagie was attracted by the sight of a butterfly, and, postponing the fish-catching, child-like, for this new attraction, he changed his course and went after it. It drew him away to the right, bearing rather towards the stream. A curve in the banks soon took him beyond view of Arthur Ashley, even supposing the latter had known he was there, and looked after him, which he did not.

It was a famous chase. Now the butterfly would descend with fluttering wings, and Carnagie, raising his hands, would deem it in his clasp. Once he thought it was his, and took off his hat to throw over it; but away it soared, high and far, as if attracted by the scent

of the distant bean-field, which went stretching down to the stream, and away and away flew the child after it, drawing nearer and nearer toward the water.

Mr. Ashley sat on, at his sport, trying to hook the fish, his head running upon hooks of another sort, in the political world. Ryle began to show symptons of weariness. His legs had never been still so long before. "Here's someone coming," he said to his papa.

It was a young woman, Carnagie's nurse. "If you please, sir," she said, advancing close to them, "where is Master Ashley?"

"Master Ashley!" returned Arthur, who did not know the girl. "Do you mean Master Carnagie Ashley?"

"Yes, sir. Sir Harry has just come home, and sent me here for him. He said he was fishing along with you, sir."

Arthur opened his eyes in wonder. "There is some mistake," he returned. "I think you must have misunderstood Sir Harry. He did not leave the child here."

"I am sure, sir, I did not misunderstand what Sir Harry said," was the reply of Patience. "My lady was not pleased, and Sir Harry said Master Ashley had made such a hullabaloo—as he called it—to stop and watch the fish caught, that he was forced to let him. And he ordered me to bring him home now, whether he cried or not."

"It is very extraordinary," exclaimed Mr. Ashley. "The child did want to remain, and I offered to take care of him, but Sir Harry said Lady Ashley would prefer his going home, and he took him away. Carnagie!" shouted Mr. Ashley, at the top of his voice, as he retreated from the bank and looked around. "Carnagie!"

No answer. The hum of the summer's afternoon, of the buzzing insects, of the gleeful birds, was in the air; but there was no other answer.

"You had better go back and inquire of Sir Harry where he left him," he said to the maid. "It was not here."

Accordingly she did so, making good speed, and Mr. Ashley resumed his seat and his rod. He was not in the least uneasy, and the matter faded from his mind, for he believed the mistake to be the servant's: that she had misunderstood her master. But, ere long, Lady Ashley was seen flying towards him.

"What have you done with my child?" she panted, as she approached; and her eyes glared, as he had never seen them glare but once, and that was several years before, in Ashley shrubbery, when she was Miss Carnagie.

Mr. Ashley rose, and raised his hat. He thought her strong emotion was but the effect of her exertion in running.

"I have sent the servant to the house to inquire of Sir Harry where he left him, Lady Ashley. It was not with me."

"It is false! False as you are, Arthur Ashley. Sir Harry did leave him with you. Give me my child! Where have you hidden him? Have you put him into the water?"

Before Mr. Ashley, surprised and confounded, could find words for reply, Sir Harry neared them. He was not so swift of foot as his wife. Patience also was advancing behind. "Arthur," called out Sir Harry, "where's Carnagie?"

"I have not seen him since you took him away. You remember you refused to leave him with me."

"I know I did. But he cried to come back, and I sent him. I watched him come."

"I assure you that he did not come," replied Mr. Ashley. "I have not stirred from this spot. Do you say you *watched* him come here?"

"I watched him half way across the field. He was making fast for you, straight as an arrow."

Arthur looked terribly confounded. And the more so because Lady Ashley still glared steadfastly upon him, with her white teeth set, and her accusing expression.

The servant, Patience, had turned aside, but was again seen advancing now. Her face was pale as with affright, and she laboured for utterance. "Oh, sir! oh, my lady!" was her confused exclamation, before she had well reached them, "Grimes's boy has just met me, and he says they think there's a child drowned, for a hat is floating on the water."

"Where? A hat—where?" demanded Mr. Ashley.

"Round there. Beyond the bend."

He rushed away, the rest following him. No one paid attention to little Ryle, so the servant picked him up in her arms, and ran after them.

Lower down the stream, much lower, they came upon a group of idlers who had collected there, labourers and others. One of them held on a stick a child's straw hat dripping with water, which he had just fished ashore. It was Carnagie Ashley's. There was nobody to be seen, they said, but it might be lower down: have gone down with the current.

"Is anything the matter?" demanded the voice of Surgeon Gay, hastening up to the people, whom he had discerned as he came along the by-path from the village.

"Matter enough," a countryman replied, "Sir Harry's heir was in the water. At least his hat was, and the boy was missing."

"I accuse him of the murder," impetuously broke forth Lady Ashley, pointing her finger at Arthur. "The child was left under his charge, and he pretends to know nothing of him. He put him into the water."

"Be quiet, be quiet, I entreat of you," cried Sir Harry, in agitation. "You cannot know what you are saying."

"The child stood between him and the inheritance," persisted Lady Ashley, who was excited almost to madness, far beyond all control. "Only yesterday we caught him plotting with one who

assured him his son should succeed to Ashley, and not Sir Harry's. It is he who has made away with the child."

Every vestige of colour—the bright colour of the Ashleys—had forsaken Mr. Ashley's cheeks, and the words, as he spoke, literally trembled from his agitated lips. "My friends," he said, standing bareheaded, "you have, most of you, known me from childhood, and can judge whether I am capable of committing so revolting a crime. Here"—he suddenly snatched at the hand of Ryle, and pulled him forward—"stands my own child: had the lives of the children been in my power, had I been compelled to sacrifice one of them, I swear to you that it should have been this one, rather than the other. Sir Harry," he added, clasping in his agitation the baronet's arm, "I never saw or heard your child from the moment you walked away with him: had I witnessed him in any danger, I would have saved his life at the expense of my own. Surely you believe me?"

"Yes, yes," groaned Sir Harry, wringing his nephew's hand. "I see how it is. I should have watched him into your charge. Something must have attracted the boy aside. It is my carelessness which has caused this."

"Oh, take heart, all of you! take heart, my lady!" said cheerful Surgeon Gay, who was sure to look on the best side of things: "you don't know yet that anything is really amiss with the boy. He may have strolled away. The hat's nothing," he continued, in answer to a man who raised it as if to confute his argument. "Last autumn, when my fourth boy's cap was discovered in Prout's Pond, and brought home, wet, to his mother, she wouldn't hear a word but that he was drowned, went into a succession of fits, and wanted me to put the shutters up. Two hours afterwards, the young Turk walked himself home, with his pinafore full of blackberries. He won't forget the tanning I gave him, though, if he lives to be a hundred."

The miller, James Heath, whose cottage was on the opposite shore, some way removed from it, was now seen crossing the foot-bridge. His face was whiter than usual, which it had little need to be, for it was always under a layer of flour. He stepped into the midst of the group, taking off his hat when he saw the Ashleys.

"Whose child is it?" he inquired. "My wife witnessed the accident from her bedroom window."

Lady Ashley grasped his arm, the white dust from the man's clothes soiling her rich gauze dress. "Speak, speak!" was echoed around, and "Speak!" reiterated that passionate lady; "tell me who threw him in."

"The little fellow was coming across the plain, my wife said, running hard, and throwing his hat up, as if trying to catch something. She thinks it might be one of the summer cockchafers, or maybe a butterfly. She could not see him distinctly so far off, but she believed it was one of the young ones from the parsonage. He was spinning along with all his might, his hat raised for another

throw, and he came, without knowing it, on to the edge of the water, and tumbled right in, head over heels."

"Why did she not save him—why did she not give the alarm?" uttered Mr. Ashley.

"Because she could not, sir, unfortunately, as Mr. Gay can tell you; she can't stir a peg."

Mr. Gay nodded. "She has not recovered the use of her limbs since her attack," he said, "and as they place her on a chair, so she must remain. I am on my way to see her now."

"She called and shouted," proceeded the miller, "till she was a'most hoarse, she says. But I was in my mill, and when that's a going there's no chance of my hearing anything else, and the girl was gone to the village. So the house-door was shut, and, more than that, all the windows were. Whose child was it?"

"It was the young heir."

The miller started, and looked at his landlord. "Oh, Sir Harry! I did not know ——"

What he would have said was interrupted by Lady Ashley. "Who pushed him in?" she uttered—"who threw him into the stream? Was it not *he*, Arthur Ashley?"

"*He!*" repeated the miller, his countenence expressing every degree of astonishment. "Lord love ye, my lady! Mr. Arthur ain't one to hurt a hair of a child's head. The poor little innocent was a running about, in his sport, and fell in of his own accord. There was not a soul near him—more's the pity but what there had been."

The body was not found till late at night, by torchlight. Sir Harry and Mr. Ashley were both amongst the crowd on the bank, and it was the latter who received the unlucky child from the men. A momentary weakness overcame him. When it had passed, he turned to his uncle. "He was my little godson," he whispered. "I would give all I am worth to recall him to life. I would have given more than I am worth to save him."

But not so said the crowd. "It is a mercy for him that he is taken in his infancy," they murmured to each other, "before the responsibility of right and wrong can lie upon him. With his crafty disposition and violent passions, there's no telling what evil he might have done, had he lived; or what might not have been his end."

"And not less a mercy for the place," muttered Surgeon Gay to himself. "It would have fared but badly, had he lived to become Sir Carnegie Ashley."

(To be continued.)

PARSIMONIOUS LIBERALITY.

By the Author of "How to be Happy, though Married," &c.

THE scorn that is often expended upon the "meanness" of economical, not to say of miserly people, would be mitigated if it were known in how many cases their savings are put to a good use and given away generously. Economy is altogether different from penuriousness, for it is economy that can always best afford to be generous. In one of his lectures, Emerson relates the following anecdote: "An opulent merchant in Boston was called on by a friend on behalf of a charity. At that time he was admonishing his clerk for using whole wafers instead of halves; his friend thought the circumstance unpropitious, but to his surprise, on listening to the appeal, the merchant subscribed five hundred dollars. The applicant expressed his astonishment that any person who was so particular about half a wafer should present five hundred dollars to a charity; but the merchant said: 'It is by saving half-wafers and attending to such little things, that I have something to give now.'" We ourselves knew of an army surgeon who, because he drew good pay and was very saving, was considerably chaffed by his brother officers. One day he quietly remarked to one who hinted that it was shabby not to contribute more towards getting up some entertainment: "If you had an old father and mother in Ireland to support, perhaps you would not be so free with your coin."

The late Marquis of Westminster was as liberal in large affairs as he was saving in trifles. A clergyman, who had been to London to consult a doctor, was dining with him. "What did the doctor advise?" asked the nobleman. "Too absurd, my lord! Horse exercise." "Then why don't you take it?" "Because I have not a horse and can't afford to buy one." "Have you a stable and a paddock?" "Yes, my lord." "Then I will give you a horse." The next day a groom rode up to the house, leading a fine horse. The grateful parson offered the man a half-sovereign, but the groom declined to take more than sixpence, saying that it would be as much as his situation was worth to accept more. "But, please sir," he added, "give me twopence for the turnpike-gate. His lordship specially told me to be sure and ask for the twopence."

Is not the thrifty character of the Scotchwoman who is described in the following, which is taken from the *San Francisco Chronicle*, deserving of respect, when we reflect that she was saving, not for herself, but for the good of her home?

"It is awfully hard to be untrue to a Scotchwoman. She makes you so very comfortable, and holds you to her, not so much by her

heart as by your bank account. She doesn't always want new bonnets ; she is rather liable to object even to your having a new hat until the old one is quite worn out. A Scotch wife can keep her husband neat and trim, and herself and her children as well, at a smaller expense than any others. She doesn't want diamond earrings for her birthday. All you have to do is to show her your bankbook and kiss her and tell her you owe the big balance to her, and she is quite satisfied.

"One young fellow did not understand the Scotch spinster, and when he thought to please her he sent her a lovely and expensive basket of flowers. He went up to receive her thanks and smiles, and he was quite knocked over when she told him he hadn't a big enough salary to waste it buying flowers for her or anybody else, and she was sorry to see he was so extravagant, because otherwise he was 'a very pleasing young man.' He lied himself back into her good graces by saying he had got the flowers for nothing and he thought he could not make better use of them. She smiled graciously and said :

"'Seein' they did na cost you anything, it's a great compliment.'

"She was a woman after all."

Radcliffe, who was physician to Queen Anne and William III., was a munificent benefactor of Oxford University, where he established the library called after him. No wonder that he left much money when he died, for, during his life, he was as mean as any miser could be. It caused him keen suffering even to pay a tradesman's bill, and yet the doctor could on occasions be very liberal. When another medico, called Drake, a hated rival of his, was broken in circumstances he gave fifty pounds to a lady for him. "Let him," he said, "by no means be told whence it comes. He is a gentleman, and has often done his best to hurt me ; he could, therefore, by no means brook the receipt of a benefit from a person whom he had used all possible means to make an enemy." So it is that the manner of giving shows the character of the giver more than the gift itself.

A GUILTY SILENCE.

CHAPTER VI.

A WELCOME SURPRISE.

THE evening of the day following that of Dr. Randolph's visit to Irongate House was devoted by Miss Davenant to a consideration of the state of her wardrobe, and to miscellaneous repairs. Latterly, however, the active fingers of Esther Sarel, the maid specially appointed to wait upon Miss Davenant, had lifted these cares off the shoulders of Margaret; and on looking through her wardrobe this morning, she found that there was really very little left for her to do. So, for lack of more serious occupation, she determined to make a slight alteration in the trimming of her bonnet; and as she toyed with the ribbons and flowers, and studied first one effect and then another, her brain was at the same time engaged desultorily on another and a very different train of thought.

Her finances stood more in need of repairs than her garments. When Trix's school bill for the last half should be paid, but very few pounds would remain in her purse; and of those few by far the larger proportion would have to go to her father, who, as we shall find in due course, was still green and flourishing, and still in a chronic state of impecuniosity. She had bought scarcely anything for herself during the past twelve months, and the wardrobe of Beatrice needed thorough renewal. She had set her heart, too, on a holiday trip to the Lakes, but, for the present, that seemed entirely out of the question; where, even, was the money for clothes to come from? In spite of herself, a feeling of bitterness crept over her at the thought that, after all her long and weary struggles against poverty, it should still be a doubtful question with her whether she could afford a new gown. It seemed as if the fruit of her labour had all gone to benefit others, and that for herself there was nothing but toil without end.

But Margaret soon put away this thought as unworthy of her, soon put the money question altogether out of her mind. In two days more her darling Beatrice would be here; and she fell to humming an old *chanson de Provence*, as though she were still a gay maiden of seventeen; when suddenly two soft hands were laid across her eyes, and her heart gave a great bound, and she knew that her sister was come. Next moment they had their arms round each other, and, with that bright head pressed to her bosom, Margaret cried tears of

sorrowful joy over the girl to whom she had been as mother and sister in one.

"Oh, my darling, my darling," murmured Margaret; "how glad I am that you are come!"

"You did not expect me so soon, did you, dear?" said Beatrice. "I thought I should give you a pleasant surprise. Madame Ducange decided, all at once, to start for London two days earlier than she had previously intended, and there was no time to write. You still look the same dear old Meg that I always remember you—not a bit altered."

"Flatterer!" sighed Margaret. "Where are your spectacles? Judge me by the alteration in yourself, and then say, if you dare, that I am unchanged. The laughing baby-sister that I once knew has vanished — whither? and in her stead I see to-day a rather tall young person, not ill-looking, who pronounces some of her English words with a French accent, and, *en revanche*, no doubt speaks French like a cockney. But, now, what will you have for breakfast? and how did you find your way in here without my knowing anything about it?"

"For breakfast, some of those cakes, if you please, which I saw a stout old lady busy baking as I came through your kitchen; I've had nothing since six this morning. As to how I came here, that is simple enough. I walked up from the station, there being no cab to be found, leaving my trunk to be sent after me; and the large gates being unfastened, I ventured in, and so through the shrubbery to the back of the house; for I wanted, if possible, to take you by surprise."

"You have made it possible by doing it," said Margaret, with another kiss. "But you must not have hot cakes for breakfast, child; they are indigestible."

"Then treat me to a fit of indigestion for once," urged Trix.

Margaret shrugged her shoulders, and rang the bell.

"This room of yours is really a very neat, cosy little nest," said Beatrice, glancing round as she sat at breakfast; "in fact, the whole house is greatly to my liking; and as to that dear, old, fat Miss Easterbrook, I am sure that I shall love her immensely."

"Remember that Miss Easterbrook will, in all probability, be your employer; and learn to speak of her with becoming respect."

"Oh, this is all between ourselves, you know. I shall be as demure as a mouse when the proper time comes."

"Then you think you shall like to live here?" said Margaret; "that you can make yourself contented and happy in this dull, smoky England?"

"I could be contented and happy anywhere, Meg, if only you were with me."

Seeing the two sisters thus together, and knowing them to be sisters, you might easily have found in the younger a certain vague, indefinite

likeness to Miss Davenant—a likeness of expression, rather than of features; for the features of Beatrice were not so well cut, they lacked somewhat of that clear chiselled completeness which distinguished those of Margaret.

But if the last few delicate touches of the master-sculptor's hand were needed to give them a thorough finish, they more than atoned for this deficiency, if such it may be called, by the warmth of their colouring, by their vivacity and ever-varying play of expression. Out of those bright brown eyes there looked at you a soul volatile and impressionable; keen to love and keen to hate; in some things as weak and whimsical as a child; in others as steadfast as a martyr.

Beatrice's hair was brown, like her eyes, and had in it a natural wave that defied restraint, and claimed for itself a certain airy freedom of conduct, the effect of which was by no means unpicturesque. She had one of those genuine English complexions, clear, bright, and healthy, that blush on the slightest provocation. She was tall, without being quite so tall as Margaret, and had a figure lithe and flexible in all its movements and graceful in all its outlines. Altogether, this Beatrice Davenant was a very charming young person; and Margaret herself could not help thinking so, as her sister sat opposite to her, dressed in a cloud of summer muslin, her white throat cinctured by a blue velvet band, and a light of gladness dancing in her eyes, as she laughed and chattered away, flitting quickly from one topic to another, as a bird flits from bough to bough.

"Such a quiet, sleepy, uneventful life as we led at that dear old *Pension Fleury!*" exclaimed Beatrice. "A slight change in the lessons, a still slighter difference in the meals, were the only events that served to distinguish one week-day from another. The monotony terrified me, crushed down both heart and brain as with a dull, leaden weight. The high walls of the *jardin*, beyond which we were rarely allowed to wander, seemed to suffocate me; I felt an intense longing to scale them, to get away by any means, however desperate—away into the great, free, joyous world outside. I often used to fancy that had it been my lot to pass the whole of my life in the *Pension Fleury*, such protests on my part against the wearisomeness of existence would, in the course of time, have become few and far between; that I should gradually have crystallised, as it were, as Madame Ducange and her sister must have done, if they ever really were young women, which I sometimes felt inclined to doubt; that, in the course of years, I should have become so accustomed to the unvarying sameness of such a life as to pine and fret whenever anything chanced to mar the clock-like regularity of its movements."

"Such a fate, my Trix, could never be thine, or I have not studied thy disposition aright. And now," continued Margaret, "if you have really done your breakfast, we will have a little music. That old semi-grand of mine has still a pleasant voice of its own when properly

humoured; let us see whether you have sufficient magic in your fingers to coax from it some of its sweet secrets."

So Beatrice sat down to the piano, and played one piece after another, till Margaret signified that she had had enough.

"And now, come and read me the first chapter of 'Tolla,'" she said. So Beatrice read aloud the first chapter of "Tolla."

"Quite good enough for all practical purposes," said the critical Margaret, referring both to the reading and the playing; "but susceptible of improvement. There is one thing that you must still continue to do."

"And what is that?"

"Practise, practise, practise."

"I thought my education was complete," sighed Beatrice, "and that I should have nothing to do now but teach others."

"In our profession, one's education can never be said to be complete; and I do not doubt that it is the same in every other profession worthy of the name."

"I am so weary of lessons and learning!" murmured Beatrice.

"You shall have a month's holiday, my Trix, before you do another lesson, and then we will strive to make them pleasanter to you than they have ever been yet. And now I will just write out a message to send by telegraph to Papa, telling him that he may expect us by the first train to-morrow; and then ——"

"How stupid I am!" interrupted Trix. "I forgot to tell you that I promised to meet Madame Ducange at Milhampton to-morrow, near to which town she has a sister living who is married to an Englishman. Madame pressed me so much to go and see her sister, and the place where she lives, that I could not well refuse; in fact, she would not part from me till I promised to meet her there to-morrow: and I have an invitation for you also, in my bag."

"Much obliged to Madame; but greatly as I should like to see her again, I must decline the visit," said Margaret, whose thoughts reverted involuntarily to the state of her wardrobe. "Neither do I feel very amicably towards her just now, for running away with you so soon after your arrival."

"It will only be for two days, dear," pleaded Trix; "after that, I shall be with you altogether."

"Having promised, you must of course go," said Margaret; "and our visit to Papa must be put off till you return."

CHAPTER VII.

THE MEETING IN THE LANE.

On the evening of the day of Trix's arrival at Irongate House, she and Margaret set out for a country ramble. After wandering about the fields, and hunting for the rarer kinds of wild flowers till they

were tired, they turned their faces homeward, and found themselves after a time in one of those pleasant, leafy, zigzag lanes, shut in by high green banks, and overshadowed by a green tracery of boughs, which seem made on purpose for lovers' rambles on dewy summer eves. They had nearly reached the end of this lane when a sudden turn brought them face to face with Hugh Randolph. With a little spasm of vexation, Margaret saw that a meeting was inevitable, and so decided to make the best of what could not be helped. With outstretched hand and ready smile, she turned to greet the young doctor; but, for once, her smile was only of the lips, and just then no light of welcome shone in those dark and troubled eyes.

"Now this is really a pleasant surprise!" she murmured sweetly, as her fingers rested lightly for a moment in Hugh's palm. "In us you behold two poor damsels of vagrant habits, who have been wandering forlorn o'er hill and dale in search of the fair goddess Hygeia; and now that you have come thus suddenly upon us, issuing from yonder gloomy wood like some hero of old romance, we will accept your convoy as far as our ancestral castle, whose battlements are even now discernible above the trees."

Hugh bowed low in mock solemnity.

"With me you are already acquainted," continued Margaret, "bu the damsel at my side, if I mistake not, has been seen by you but once before—in Lutetia the Beautiful—and that so long ago, that it were well, perhaps, to look upon this in the light of a first meeting. Thus then, Sir Knight, allow me to introduce to your notice and protection my sister, the Demoiselle Beatrice Davenant, a feather-brained young person of immature intellect and undecided tastes. Trix, child, this is Sir Hugh de Randolph, a gallant soldier of these parts, whose life is devoted to doing battle with the grim dragon, Disease, in all his thousand hideous forms; and, to my mind, it is one of the noblest causes for which a man can buckle on armour. Make thy prettiest curtsey to so distinguished a knight."

And with a low cynical laugh, Margaret fell back a pace or two, and resumed her hunt for wild-flowers with the utmost apparent unconcern.

Ordinarily, Hugh Randolph was one of the most self-possessed of individuals, but on the present occasion, his usual coolness and happy audacity quite deserted him for some moments, and the sensation was, for him, both novel and unpleasant. He did somehow contrive to mutter something that was almost inaudible about the pleasure he felt at meeting Beatrice again, intermixing with it the assurance that their first meeting in Paris had by no means been forgotten by him; to all which Trix contrived to murmur some equally commonplace reply (is not the most delicious love generally made in commonplaces?); and then, by some strange accident, their eyes chanced to meet, and in Trix's brown orbs Hugh read—or fancied that he read, for in many things he was a presumptuous mortal—

something that emboldened him, and at the same moment kindled in his heart a delicious fire that thrilled through all his veins, and shone through his eyes, and made all the world to him seem suddenly beautiful.

They had halted for a couple of minutes only, and were now wandering slowly onward towards the end of the lane. Hugh's eager, passionate glance had not escaped unnoticed by Margaret's keen eyes, nor the heightened flush on Trix's cheek; so, with a little sigh, she tossed her wild flowers contemptuously away and moved into position adroitly between the two. But Hugh had contrived to pull himself together by this time, and when he next spoke his tones were just as grave and quiet as usual. His conversation naturally reverted to the youthful ward whom he had taken to Paris the year before; and although, as he told Beatrice, he had heard from her frequently, he was yet anxious to have the assurance of one who had seen her so lately that she was really well and happy. The topic was one that interested Trix, and by means of a judicious question now and again Margaret contrived to make it last till they reached the cross-road which led from the direct Helsingham road to Irongate House and that part of the suburbs. Margaret would not hear of Dr. Randolph going a step further with them, and was so peremptory in the matter that he was fain to obey with the best grace possible. So a friendly farewell was said and they parted.

Trix was tired with her walk and inclined, for more reasons than one, perhaps, for silence and reverie; whereas Margaret was in what, for her, was an unusually talkative mood, and entered into an elaborate account of the management and interior economy of Miss Easterbrook's establishment; sketching in as she did so, with a few light and humorous touches, the portrait of the kind-hearted proprietress, and those of the different teachers, till all Trix's sentimental cobweb fancies had vanished, for that time, at least, and her hearty, joyous laugh made music in the empty house.

Margaret's sleep that night was troubled by strange dreams; vague forecasts of coming trouble they seemed to her after she awoke. Even after Margaret had breakfasted, and had seen Trix off by train on her visit to Madame Ducange, she found it quite impossible to shake off the painful impression produced on her mind by this dream.

"It must not be," she cried, with an angry stamp of her foot as she paced her little sitting-room after her return from the station. "Have I toiled for her early and late, and impoverished myself all these years merely that she may become the wife of an obscure country surgeon? It is quite evident that but a little spark is needed here to kindle a great fire. It must be my task to keep them apart, and that will not be so very difficult after school recommences.

The mood in which she then was was one not readily to be dissipated, so long as she chose to give way to such vain self-communing. So, in order to divert her mind from a subject so

painful, she went herself and fetched little Miss Morrison, the invalid pupil, down to her own room, greatly to the delectation of the latter; for Dora was beginning to find the monotony of her chamber, and the company of the good-natured but somnolent Mrs. Greene, somewhat wearisome. Besides which, she had already discovered that the severe and awe-inspiring Miss Davenant of the class-room was a very different personage from the smiling, benignant Miss Davenant of vacation time, and was fast learning to love her with all a school-girl's gushing affection. So Dora was installed in Margaret's own easy-chair and propped up with pillows; and then Margaret played to her all sorts of delicious music and sang all the gayest ditties with which her memory was stored. By-and-by, a dainty tea for two was brought in, and if Dora lives to be a hundred, she will never forget the flavour of that delicious honey. But presently came Mrs. Greene, like the bitters that always follow the sweets in life, and vowed that it was time for missy to go to her own room, for what would Dr. Randolph say next morning if he found his little patient worse instead of better? So, after half-an-hour's grace, asked for her by Margaret, Dora was obliged to bid her darling Miss Davenant good night, not without a kiss and a nestle on her shoulder first, you may be sure, and accompany the "Green Ogre," as the worthy housekeeper was nicknamed by the pupils of Irongate House, up to bed.

Left alone, Margaret took up a book of travel that had just been sent her from the library, and strove to compose her mind for a little quiet reading. But her thoughts would go back to that troubled business which had occupied them in the morning. She found herself skimming one page after another without having the least recollection of what she had read. At length she flung down her book in despair, and rang the bell imperatively, as though it were an exorcism by means of which she could charm away the dark web of tangled thoughts which clouded her brain this sunny evening. Almost before the last tinkle had died away, the door was softly opened, and Esther Sarel waited to receive the commands of Miss Davenant.

A country-bred girl, evidently, this Esther Sarel, judging from the fresh, healthy colour in her face—a face by no means without freckles during these hot summer months; irregular in its outlines; rather a homely face, in fact, but prepossessing from its expression of sincerity and good temper. She had dark, frank-looking eyes; hair crisp and wavy, in colour a reddish-brown; a mouth too wide to be handsome, but which curved readily into a smile, displaying as it did so a set of very white teeth, which had been the secret envy of Miss Easterbrook from the day that lady had first seen them. In dress and personal appearance Esther was the very pink of neatness, otherwise you may be sure she would never have been appointed to wait on Miss Davenant.

"I am going into the town, Esther, to make a few purchases," said Margaret, "and I shall call on Miss Ivimpey when I have done

shopping. In the meantime I want you to go as far as Leyland's, to inquire whether the bonnet which they had a fortnight ago to clean is yet done. If it is not done, urge them to get it completed by to-morrow evening, as I shall probably go out of town the following day, and shall want it. If the bonnet is done bring it with you; but whether it be done or not, call at Miss Ivimpey's as you come back, and let me know the result of your visit."

A few minutes later Margaret was ready to go out. She took her way slowly through the shubbery, and, with the aid of a pass-key, let herself out through a side door into the high-road. Sunset splendours filled the Western sky as she took her way towards the town. After reaching the foot of the hill she had to pass through a long, pleasant, straggling suburb before coming to the busier parts of Helsingham. The main street of the little town was quite crowded this fine summer evening with a laughing, talking, heedless throng, through which Margaret held on her way steadily.

She felt inspirited by the bustle and liveliness around her, following, as they did, so close upon her morbid, solitary musings. She had three or four small purchases to make at different places, but they did not detain her long; and at last she found herself at Miss Ivimpey's and the post-office.

CHAPTER VIII.

MARGARET.

THE Helsingham post-office had originally been a private residence, of genteel and dignified appearance, and dated its entrance into public life from the introduction of the system of penny postage, up to which time a corner of a window in a grocer's shop had been found sufficient to meet all the postal requirements of the little town. A large bow-window that opened into the main street, the lower panes of which were composed of ground glass, while the upper ones were covered with post-office notices, formed the medium of communication with the public; over which window a rude portico had latterly been built, to serve as a shelter from the weather. The entrance to the house was down a gateway or passage at the side, a fashion by no means uncommon even among the better class of Helsingham houses. As you went in by this door, there was a wide oaken staircase before you; on the right was a glass door, shaded by a thin muslin blind, which opened into the office; and on the left, another door admitting into the family sitting-room. Margaret found the outer door set open this hot summer evening, and was just about to summon someone when Miss Ivimpey, coming suddenly out of the office, caught her with the knocker in her hand. They greeted each other cordially, and Miss Ivimpey, who just then was busy sorting the letters of a country mail which had lately come in, made Margaret go back with

her into the office, and placed her on a chair of state in the middle of the room.

"You know, dear, I don't make a point of asking people in here who come to see me," said Miss Ivimpey; "and I suppose Charles would say it was contrary to instructions to do so; but I make an exception in favour of you, and one or two more old friends. I shall have finished this bag in five minutes, and then we can have a comfortable chat, for it's nearly an age since I saw you last."

Miss Ivimpey was a spare-built lady, of middle age, neatly dressed in a gown of snuff-coloured merino, with a black silk apron and black lace mittens; with a pair of silver-rimmed spectacles perched on the extreme tip of her nose; and with six fat little curls of her own grey hair—curls such as she had worn when a girl of eighteen, except that they were then black—kept in their places by the aid of a couple of small combs. Crowning these curls was a flimsy but wonderful structure, compact of lace, ribbons and artificial flowers, tossed together in an elaborately careless fashion, held together with a stitch or two of the needle, and styled, by courtesy, a cap. These caps, which were Miss Ivimpey's own invention and manufacture, were at once the plague and delight of her life, and the envy and admiration of her friends.

"There, my dear Miss Davenant, that's out of hand for another four-and-twenty hours," said Miss Ivimpey, as she proceeded to seal up the bag on which she had been engaged. "Excuse me, my dear friend, but you don't take exercise enough; you don't get out sufficiently into the fresh air and sunshine. No use your shaking your head at me; I know that what I say is true, or else why those pale cheeks, and those dark circles under your eyes? You learned, studious folk are apt to forget one thing, that it is foolish wisdom to cultivate the mind at the expense of the body. Look at my brother Charles, now; he's as fresh as a daisy, and as rosy as a new-boiled lobster, and yet he is up at work in the office till three o'clock in the morning every night of his life. (I hope that's not an Irishism, my dear.) And how does he manage to do it, and keep so hearty? Why, as soon as he has had his breakfast, between ten and eleven, he takes down his rod, and puts on a pair of strong boots, and away he goes, four or five miles down the river, to some favourite fishing-spot, and he seldom gets back till dark; but whether he brings any fish home or not, he can't help getting the exercise, and that's just what keeps him as well as he is."

Here came an interruption in the form of a tap outside the window, and Miss Ivimpey limped across the room—one of her legs was shorter than the other—to attend to it. On opening the little casement by means of which she communicated with the public, a shock head of hair and two dirty hands could be seen above the window-sill, from the youthful owner of which came a shrill request: "A penny postage, if you please, 'm."

"I have come, this evening, on purpose to speak to you about the case of John Betts," said Margaret, when she returned. "You may, perhaps, remember that I spoke to you about him a short time ago. Betts is a good honest fellow, but he can't get any permanent work here, so he has made up his mind to try his fortunes in Australia. Some friends have contrived to find the necessary funds to pay the passage of himself and family, but his wife and children are wretchedly off for clothing, and I think the case is one where the Sewing Society might reasonably afford some assistance."

"To be sure, my dear Miss Davenant; very right of you to mention it; and I'll lay the case before the Society at its meeting next week. But how is it, my dear friend, if you will allow me to ask, that you have never been to any of the Society's meetings these three months past? Your absence has been a source of much remark, I assure you."

"I have been busily engaged for some time past," replied Margaret. "When my day's duties in the school are over, I rarely feel any desire to go out. My brain tells me to shut myself up in my room, and not read anything heavier than a novel, on pain of having one of those fearful headaches to which I am so liable; and then, you know, I always take my constitutional in a morning."

I am afraid that Miss Davenant was not altogether ingenuous in her statement of the reasons which prevented her from attending the weekly meetings of the Helsingham Sewing Society. She had made a point of being a regular attendant at them for some time after Miss Ivimpey had pressed her into becoming a member; she had found the change from the dulness of the schoolroom to the company of the kind-hearted, garrulous, middle-aged ladies of whom the Society was chiefly composed, beneficial to her health of mind; she could relish a bit of quiet gossip, too, as well as any of her neighbours. But when, after a time, in consequence of the accession of certain new members, this harmless gossip began to degenerate into downright scandal, Margaret quietly resolved to stay at home for the future, and give the Society, which effected much good in its way, the benefit of her needle without that of her company.

"But now that the vacation has commenced," urged Miss Ivimpey, "you have, doubtless, more spare time on your hands, and I hope we shall have the pleasure of seeing you at our next meeting."

"Had you a good attendance last Monday evening?" asked Margaret evasively.

"Yes, very good. Everybody was there, except yourself and Miss Timmins. Ah! that's the Crickfield mail-cart coming up the street, at a good pace too, and with five minutes to spare!"

Next minute a hardy-looking, weather-beaten man entered the office,

carrying several small, sealed letter-bags, which he gave into the hands of Miss Ivimpey, receiving from her the return bags, with which he would start back in the course of a few minutes, and the contents of which would be distributed among various outlying villages early next morning. As soon as the man was gone, Miss Ivimpey proceeded to open the bags he had brought, one after another, shaking out the contents on to the desk before her, ready for sorting. Margaret rose to go. Esther was long in coming: perhaps she had been detained somewhere on the road; it was not worth while waiting for her any longer.

"Do not stir yet, my dear Miss Davenant," exclaimed the post-mistress. "My brother will be here in a few minutes, and then I shall be at liberty, and will walk a little way back with you, if you have no objection."

Margaret sat down again: a few minutes more or less would not matter.

"I think it will be as well to light the gas before proceeding any further," observed Miss Ivimpey. "My eyes are not so young as they used to be, and these country-written addresses are often very difficult to make out."

But one of the burners refused to give more than a very faint light when the match was applied to it. So Miss Ivimpey, who, despite her lameness, was still tolerably active, placed a chair against the desk, and then mounted from one to the other, so as to have full command of the offending tube, and then proceeded to remove the obstruction with a needle. Having accomplished her task, she prepared to descend; but, in doing so, her foot suddenly slipped, and in trying to save herself from falling, the skirts of her dress swept on to the floor the whole of the letters which she had just taken out of the country bags and spread on the counter ready for sorting, together with one other letter, which Miss Ivimpey had put aside for special delivery; a letter written on foreign paper, and which had not formed part of the Crickfield mail.

Miss Ivimpey was on the floor almost as soon as the letters were. "Don't disturb yourself, I beg, Miss Davenant," she exclaimed, as she began to pick them up. "How very awkward of me, to be sure!"

Margaret, from delicacy, forebore to touch the letters, which were quickly replaced on the counter—all except the one written on foreign paper, which, unperceived by either of the ladies, had slid under the flounces of Margaret's dress, and lay there still. Miss Ivimpey had not missed it.

"Charles's footstep, I declare!" observed Miss Ivimpey; "and I'll be bound that gossiping girl of ours is out somewhere, and no kettle boiling. Pray excuse me for a minute or two, while I go and brew him a cup of tea: he always likes one cup of strong tea when he comes in from fishing."

Left alone, Margaret looked at her watch, and finding the hour later than she had supposed, she determined to wait for Esther no longer, forgetting, for the moment, that Miss Ivimpey had promised to go part of the way back with her. As she rose and pushed away her chair, she heard a sound of tearing paper; and, stepping hastily back, she saw, to her horror, a letter on the floor partially torn open; it had been caught by her chair, or her foot, or the heavy flounces of her dress; anyhow, there it was, with a great longitudinal strip torn right across its face; the seal, too, was completely smashed, and the letter pulled half open. Margaret picked it up, wondering how she should excuse herself to Miss Ivimpey for her carelessness, when she saw that it was addressed to "Hugh Randolph, Esquire, Surgeon, Helsingham, England," and that it bore the post-mark of Melbourne, Australia. While she was still looking at it, her eye was caught by three lines of the contents, visible through the rent in the paper, which she read to herself without knowing that she did so, her mind being still busy, wondering what Miss Ivimpey would say to the accident. But as she read, she started and turned pale; and the same instant a terrible temptation flashed, clear and lurid as a shaft of lightning, across her brain. She trembled, and clutched the letter tightly in both hands; and stood for a moment breathless, like one suddenly turned to stone, thinking as she had never thought before.

But there was an unseen witness of her proceedings, in the person of her maid, Esther Sarel, who, on coming to the post-office by her mistress's directions, found the front-door wide open, as already stated. While hesitating a moment how best to make her presence known, Esther's eye was attracted by the light from the office shining through the muslin blind that shaded the glass door, and took in, at the same time, with a woman's intuitive picking out of such a trifle, a minute rent in the muslin, just large enough for anyone to look through. Had Esther's thoughts at this juncture formed themselves into words, their import would have been, "I'll just peep through that tiny hole, and see whether Miss Davenant is there."

Margaret was just stooping to pick up the letter as Esther applied her eye to the peep-hole; and some vague feeling of girlish curiosity induced the latter to remain a silent witness of what followed. She saw that a great strip was torn off one side of the letter; she saw the change that swept over Margaret's face when her mind took in the full import of the words which her eyes had unconsciously read; she saw the white, firm-set face, the locked and resolute features, and the wild, scared look in the large black eyes, that yet burned with a strange fire, such as the girl had never seen in them before. Then, thinking she heard footsteps advancing from the inner room, she stepped back noiselessly into the passage, and fled thence into the street, where she wandered about aimlessly for ten minutes or more, before she could summon up sufficient courage to go back to the

post-office, and make her presence known, as she ought to have done at first, by a knock at the side-door.

But Miss Ivimpey had gone back into the office before this time. Margaret, still standing with the torn letter in her hands, while a flood of burning thoughts rushed across her brain, was disturbed by the sudden entrance of her friend. In the hurry and nervous agitation of the moment, she crushed the letter between her fingers, and thrust it quickly into the bosom of her dress. From that moment her punishment began.

Miss Ivimpey had got some embroidery she wanted to show Margaret, and would not hear of her going just yet. Then came Esther, who was asked into the office to deliver her message to her mistress, and had to stand by the counter for a minute or two, while Miss Ivimpey and Margaret discussed the question of the cleaned bonnet; the latter, alas! with what an absent heart and painfully forced attention! Already, for her, such trifles had lost all interest.

Esther was quickly dismissed, and told to get home as soon as possible. Miss Ivimpey was just going to get ready to accompany Margaret, when who should arrive but Mrs. Crowle, wife of the head lawyer in Helsingham. They all adjourned to the drawing-room, where Mrs. Crowle was charmed to have the pleasure of being introduced to Miss Davenant, who really must have taken immense pains with her Lucy and Emily, the progress they had made in various branches during the two halves they had been at Irongate House being something wonderful. And so there must be half an hour's chat about education in general, and the merits of Lucy and Emily in particular, before Margaret could get away; and then she went alone, for which she was not sorry, Miss Ivimpey being obliged to stay at home and entertain her guest.

Margaret took the road homeward like a woman in a dream. Mechanically she put her hand up to her bosom;—yes, the letter was still there, all crushed and crumpled, as she had hid it hastily within the folds of her dress. She was going the shortest way home, which would take her past Dr. Randolph's house; but when she reached the market-place, instead of going straight along the lower side of it, as she would ordinarily have done, and so have passed the house, she chose rather to go out of her way, and along the upper side; and so through the covered market, and out into Stillman's Lane; and thence up the hill at a swift pace, leaving the town behind her, in which the lamps were now being lighted one after another, for the dusky summer twilight was deepening into night. She felt already that she would gladly give all she possessed, if by so doing she could replace the letter on Miss Ivimpey's desk, and bring back the peace of mind which had been her own but one short hour ago. She had degraded herself for ever in her own eyes. She, the refined and fastidious Margaret Davenant, who secretly prided herself on her intellectual attainments, had actually read part of a letter belonging

to another person ; and, worse still, was at that moment conveying the letter surreptitiously away ! She stopped in her hurried walk, and pressed her hand to her forehead, and asked herself whether she was not beset by some horrible nightmare. The old theory of demoniacal possession seemed to her, at that moment, a fact that breathed a dread significance. Then her fingers wandered to her bosom again. It was all true, then ? the accursed scrap of paper, for which she had sold herself to the fiend, was really there ! The force of the temptation, which for one brief instant had so dazzled her brain as to confound her distinction of right and wrong, was already so far weakened that it dwelt in her memory as a wild, vague, impossible scheme, such as might haunt the dreams of a mad woman. But was it indeed too late to repair the wrong she had done ? No ! she would go back at once, and tell Miss Ivimpey everything, and take the consequences, whatever they might be. She knew Dr. Randolph well, and she felt assured that he would forgive her. But in that case she must give up all thought of acting on the information she had bought at such a bitter cost. Well, better that—better anything, rather than that she should keep this accursed letter which belonged to another !

Thinking thus, Margaret Davenant turned to retrace her way to the post-office ; but had not gone back more than a few yards when she was overtaken by Esther Sarel, pale, and breathless with running.

"Oh, Miss, I'm so glad to have caught you ! " exclaimed the girl. " Here's a telegraphic message, which I found when I got home ; and as the envelope is marked 'Immediate,' I thought I'd better run off and try to find you. I do hope it contains no bad news."

Margaret took the envelope with a foreboding heart and, hurrying to the nearest lamp, tore it open and read, "Your sister has met with an accident. Come by first train."

" Inquire at the station what time the next train for the south is due," said Margaret to Esther, "and then follow me home as quickly as possible." And with that, she turned her face from the post-office and set out at a rapid pace for Irongate House, forgetting, for a time, the letter and everything else in this sudden access of a new trouble, of the dimensions of which she was as yet in utter ignorance.

CHAPTER IX.

STRUGGLING UPWARD.

In a little cottage, with flagged floors and whitewashed walls, in one of the lowest suburbs of Helsingham, dwelt Silas Ringe and his bedridden mother. Silas had been left fatherless when quite a little fellow, but his mother had an annuity, or "pension," as she called it, of some twenty pounds a year, which, together with the money she earned by going out as charwoman—for she had only become infirm of late years—had been sufficient to maintain the two in tolerable

comfort till Silas grew up to be a young man, and was able to take part of the burden on to his own shoulders. Silas was a carpenter by trade, and—despite his club foot, touching which he was to the full as sensitive as the celebrated poet who suffered from a similar infirmity—an excellent carpenter too. The little household was completed by the presence of a red-armed and red-haired young woman, whom Silas had imported from a neighbouring agricultural district, to look after the comforts of his helpless mother and prepare his own meals.

As a lad, Silas had been constitutionally weak and ailing, and each of his birthdays, as it came round, was a fresh surprise to his mother, who, as she often said to her neighbours, had made up her mind years ago that he was not long for this world. He was apprenticed to a carpenter because whatever tastes he had were supposed to lie in that direction. When little more than a child, he would sit quietly, for hours at a time, with a bit of wood and a pocket-knife, fashioning to the best of his ability, sometimes a boat, sometimes a doll's head, then an elephant or a rough dog; all very rudely done, in some cases almost requiring to be labelled before one could tell what particular animal they were intended to represent. He kept on using his knife all the time he was at school. It was the lad's only friend, for he never cared to mingle much among his schoolfellows; and many a scrape he got into through carving his own and his companions' names on form and desk and schoolroom door.

But when Silas's apprenticeship was six months old, he shut up his knife and determined to put it to such unprofitable use no more. At the bottom of the garden which ran back from his mother's cottage was an old outhouse, and this was now converted by Silas into a work-shop, where most of his leisure time was passed. Here he put up a small joiner's bench and a rude lathe; and, with such tools as he could get together, for he had to buy them second-hand and one at a time out of his scanty pocket-money, he began the construction of a table for his mother. But the table lingered month after month, and was deserted by the time it was half done for some other object which took his fancy more strongly, and so with twenty other different things, which he set about in red-hot ardour, but grew disgusted with before completion. Even for the business to which he was apprenticed he was beginning to show signs of indifference and disgust, chafing under the restraints to which he was subjected, and looking forward already to the time when he should be his own master and able, if so minded, to wander away into that great world of which he knew so little and seek his fortune elsewhere. So, after a time, the outhouse was shut up and the tools left to rust in idleness, and Silas, a shy, shambling youth of eighteen, who blushed on the slightest provocation, felt that life held nothing worth living for, and was ready to believe himself one of the most ill-used individuals in existence.

This was, for Silas Ringe, a period of transition, which lasted for nearly two years—a strange, wretched time, during which he was like a man groping in the dark, striving in vain to find some crevice in his dungeon through which a ray of blessed sunlight might fall. There was a power within him crying aloud, with a voice full of anguish, but its words were beyond his skill to interpret. He was more moody, silent and irritable at this time than he had ever been before. "He mought be cutting his eye-teeth over again, he's that bad-tempered," observed his mother to one of the neighbours. "He sits glowering into the fire for hours at a time: and when he's spoken to, as often as not he'll never answer back. What's come over the lad it's past my bit of knowledge to find out. I thought, at first, he must be in love: but now, I'm sadly afeard it's something far worse."

What that something was, and whether it was better or worse than being in love, Silas himself would have been utterly unable to explain, it was like a dull smouldering fire burning within him continually—a sacrificial fire that demanded its victims, and, as yet, Silas could find nothing to immolate but his own heart.

Perhaps the greatest show-place in all those pleasant midland counties, in the heart of which Helsingham is situated, is Cheveleigh House, the residence, for about six weeks each year, of the Duke of Cheltenham; celebrated, chiefly, for its magnificent gardens, and its collection of pictures, equalled by few private galleries in the kingdom. People from all parts of the country visit Cheveleigh House, for there is no difficulty in getting through it. As guests, it has probably, at one time or another, entertained more distinguished personages than any other house in England not an abode of royalty.

The Duke's steward having decided that certain repairs were required in some of the domestic offices attached to the House, it fell out that Silas Ringe and several of his fellow-workmen were sent to execute the repairs in question. The work they had to do occupied them for several days, but when they were ready to start back for Helsingham, the steward was gracious enough to say that he supposed they would like to see over the house and grounds before leaving, and deputed one of the footmen to act as their *cicerone*. To the fancy of Silas Ringe, the whole place seemed like a magnificent castle that had been transplanted from fairy-land. As he wandered through one gorgeous saloon after another, crowded with treasures of ancient and modern art, and caught glimpses, through the lofty windows, of that wonderful gardener's landscape outside, where trees and flowers, statues and fountains, green turf and winding gravel-walk, were mingled with such consummate art, and with such an eye for effect, he felt crushed by his own utter insignificance.

Only two more rooms and the sculpture gallery remained to be seen, when, in a saloon, smaller and dingier than any through which they had yet passed, Silas's eye was caught by something high up on one of the walls, which he proceeded to examine with a rapt atten-

tion, such as he had bestowed on nothing else which he had yet seen. Observing the young workman's eager gaze, the officiating Jeames condescended to explain. "That," said he, in his lofty, sing-song style, like a showman in a superior way of business, "is a group of dead birds carved in wood by the celebrated Grinling Gibbons, and said to be one of the finest specimens of that well-known master. To the left is a piece of lace cut out of a single block by the same hand."

Silas's hungry eyes seemed as though they would never be tired of gazing. He lingered till all his companions had gone forward into the next room, and was only recalled to himself by an impatient summons from the conductor of the party. He had but little attention left for anything that was shown afterwards. These two masterpieces of carving dwelt in his memory—a vision of beauty never by him to be forgotten. He saw, and he determined to imitate. That was as far as his ambition carried him as yet—merely to imitate. The time was not yet ripe; he had many bitter lessons to learn by heart before the true measure of his strength should dawn upon him, and he should learn that not in dead imitations of others, but through vital creations of his own, could his genius ever blossom into the perfect flower. For true it was—an indisputable fact—that this poor washerwoman's son was informed with the divine fire of genius, was touched with that celestial madness with which, in a higher degree, a Praxiteles, a Michael Angelo, a Thorwaldsen were stricken. Day and night, for nearly a week after he got home, Silas Ringe brooded over those two masterpieces of the great carver which he had seen at Cheveleigh House; and then, out of his scanty savings, he purchased a block of boxwood and a set of carver's tools, which latter articles he had to order specially from London, there being nothing of the kind known in Helsingham. These obtained, he set to work to produce in wood a representation of a stuffed snipe, which, in its rude glass case, had formed one of the chief ornaments of his mother's cottage from time immemorial. Much time and much patient labour were expended by Silas on this, his first work since the days of his pocket-knife caricatures at school, and the result was something very closely approaching a failure. When the snipe was finished to the best of his ability, he put it on the table before him, and sat staring at it in a sort of comic despair. Could that ungainly log of wood be seriously intended to afford anyone a representation of the sprightly, long-billed haunter of wintry pools? It would serve admirably to mend the fire with, but was certainly fit for nothing more. "Try again; better luck next time," said Silas in his homely way. And try again he did, and again and again after that, each effort being an improvement on the previous one, and approaching nearer to that standard of perfection which he had set up in his own mind. Then, when he had had enough of the snipe, he set to work on a dead robin, which he found one morning frozen among the snow; but when he had done his best, his robin

was but a very rude copy of the original, or seemed so to the fastidious Silas. After the robin, he tried his skill on a wreath of mistletoe and ivy; and this was a labour of love, which lasted him from midwinter till far into spring; for Silas possessed indomitable perseverance, and a patience that knew no weariness. And so he went on from one thing to another, slowly and almost imperceptibly advancing. After many efforts and blind struggles, his genius had at length found its proper outlet, and he was happy in his work. Much of that moody, irritable manner which had characterised him before now wore itself gradually away; and although he was still as shy and awkward as ever he had been, his shyness was merely that of a sensitive nature that fears a rebuff, and his awkwardness that of one who lacks self-confidence, and has never had an opportunity of smoothing away some of his angularities by contact with the world of men and manners. However distasteful to him his ordinary occupation as a carpenter might be, he rarely alluded to it; but when his apprenticeship was over, he quietly asked for and obtained employment as a journeyman under his old master, and seemed, to all his acquaintances, to have settled down into the groove in which he would run for the remainder of his life, as an unambitious country carpenter of average abilities.

Such was Silas Ringe at the age of twenty-four, when he first comes before the reader as a character in this history: a thin, angular-jointed young fellow, with a white, consumptive-looking face; with straw-coloured hair and a sandy beard, straggling and pointed; with blue eyes that looked rather weak and watery in the full glare of midday, but which seemed to shine with a lustre all their own when darkness set in, and Silas, shut up in his little outhouse, with his lamp and his chisel, saw his work grow in beauty before him, and caught, at such times, clearer glimpses of Nature's method of working than at any other.

A few specimens of Silas's handiwork had got scattered about the town by this time, and one man at least there was—Van Noorden, the bookseller—who thought he saw in these labours of his young townsman evidence of talent far out of the ordinary way. Van Noorden, the first opportunity he had, showed one or two of the carvings to Lord Borrowash, who looked in at his shop occasionally when in the town. Lord Borrowash prided himself on being a connoisseur and patron of the arts generally, and had a very wide knowledge of matters relating to old pictures, old sculpture, old carvings, old china, and black-letter editions; and being a man of few prejudices, he was always ready to extend a helping hand—providing such act did not necessitate the dipping of his other hand into his pocket—to struggling merit. And merit there undoubtedly was in the wood-carvings of Silas Ringe, as his lordship was not slow to perceive; and he left with the worthy bookseller an intimation that he should be glad if the young artist would take an early opportunity of calling upon him.

White Towers, as everybody knows who is learned in such matters, is the ancestral seat of the Borrowash family; but the present lord had never lived there since he came into the title. His father and grandfather before him had been noted spendthrifts and gamblers; and he himself, in his salad days, had been a tremendous dandy, with a weakness for horseflesh and the coulisses; all which ended, at last, in a sharp pull-up from the Jews, a crash, and a compulsory residence abroad for the space of fifteen years. He did not drop in for the title and estates till he was forty-five years old, when he found himself with a constitution and a fortune dilapidated alike; so he set himself sedulously to the nursing of one and the other, having found leisure enough, during his enforced exile, to see the folly of his youthful excesses. He was now sixty years old, and lived in a little cottage on his own estate, about a mile and a half from the Towers; with two maid-servants, a footman, and a stable lad to look after the one steady-going cob, which was now the sole representative of his once magnificent stud. His frugal table was supplied with fruit, vegetables, and game from the Towers gardens and preserves, which were carefully kept up, being looked upon by their economical proprietor as a valuable source of revenue. It was whispered, too, in Helsingham—but it may have been merely a bit of local scandal—that his lordship actually let off the Towers itself, as a show-place, for a certain annual stipend, to his own housekeeper, that stately dame taking, in return, the whole of the fees derivable from sightseers.

After all, the old lord's object was a laudable one: he hoped, by strict economy, to be able at his death to leave the estate to his son and heir unburdened by a single debt or mortgage. It was his way of repenting the follies of his youth; and by no means a bad way, as the world goes.

He received Silas very kindly, and made him sit down opposite to him, and chatted away while he finished his late breakfast; for he had been up since five o'clock looking after his farm-labourers, and was now engaged on a second matutinal meal. With a few insidious questions, he drew Silas out to speak of himself and his works, of his hopes and fears; and it was really a fresh experience to the peer, to be able to enter so minutely into the inner life of one who had been born and bred in a sphere so much below that of his own. For the good breeding of Lord Borrowash quickly put Silas at his ease; and sympathy and appreciation being two things to which he was utterly unaccustomed, the simple young fellow had laid bare his heart for his lordship's inspection before he knew what he was about.

"Undoubtedly, Mr. Ringe, you possess very considerable talent," said Lord Borrowash. "No one who has seen the specimens of your work which Van Noorden showed me the other day can doubt that fact; and by the aid of that talent you ought to work your way upward in the world to a much higher position than the one you now occupy. Let me counsel you, however, not to pluck the immature

fruit. Do not allow yourself to be led away by any little local triumphs which you may achieve, but go on working quietly and patiently, and doing your best to improve yourself; and I doubt not that, in time, you will find a circle of admirers far larger and more appreciative than twenty little Helsinghams could ever offer you. I did not, however, get you here with the intention of doing nothing but sermonize. I am going to offer you a commission."

Silas's heart gave one great throb, and then stopped; not for his life could he have found a word to say at that supreme moment.

"Yes, I think that will be the most sensible way of showing my appreciation of your talents," resumed the peer, with a smile. "I want you, if you please, to execute a sideboard for me—not, indeed, that it will ever be made use of in my lifetime—a sideboard to fit into, and occupy, the space between the two end windows of the dining-saloon at White Towers. It must be made of oak, and I will send you the dimensions in the course of a few days. I have some wood at Chingay which will do excellently for the purpose, and I will have some proper pieces looked out, and sent to your address. Take as long a time for the work as you like; I am in no hurry; and as for terms, we will discuss them another time; I don't suppose we shall quarrel on that score. What say you to my proposition?"

Silas's tongue was loosened by this time, and he thanked Lord Borrowash in a few simple, feeling words.

"I have no wish to tie you down to any one form or design," resumed the peer. "Think the matter over for a few weeks, and then send me a sketch on paper—as roughly done as you please—of what you propose to do, and I will let you know how far it accords with my own ideas on the subject. Above all things, don't hurry the work; take ample time and do your best."

Lord Borrowash then rose and rang for Ranger to be brought round, and, jogging quietly along on his sober old cob, he accompanied Silas through the park and up the glorious avenue that leads to the east lodge, chatting pleasantly all the way, and bade him a cordial farewell at the gate.

And now, after the labour of twenty months, Silas Ringe's work was slowly growing in beauty and completeness. Each day saw some delicate touch added, some minute feature brought more clearly out, all tending towards the perfection of the whole; for Silas exhausted a world of patient labour in his efforts to make the work of his hands come up to the ideal standard of his brain, but was rarely more than half satisfied with the result. One or two hints had been thrown out by the peer that, should the work, when completed, prove worthy of such an honour, he should like it to be sent to the Great Exhibition, which was to be held in London in the course of a year or two, and about which all the world was now beginning to talk; and from that moment all Silas's ambitious dreams hinged themselves on such a glorious possibility.

With the exception of Van Noorden, who was privileged to come and go as often as he chose, and one other person, the workshop of Silas Ringe had very few visitors.

That other person was Esther Sarel.

CHAPTER X.

HUMBLE LOVES.

Silas Ringe and Esther Sarel "kept company." With the origin and commencement of their courtship it is not necessary that we should concern ourselves here; it is sufficient to state that their engagement was about twelve months old at the time of which we write and that they loved each other very sincerely. Silas's commission for Lord Borrowash was undertaken before he made the acquaintance of Esther Sarel, and they had been engaged for three months before Silas said a word about it. Was Esther glad or sorry when, one evening in the spring of the year preceding that in which our story opens, as they were walking together through a country lane, made shady with the fresh greenery of May, Silas, with a burst of homely eloquence, told her he had already learned to love so well, the whole story of his inward life, without reserve or concealment—all his struggles in time past, and all his ambitious dreams, still cherished so fondly in secret, which the future was to turn into golden realities? Was Esther glad or sorry when she heard all this? I am disposed to think that, with a new sense of pride in Silas and his achievements, such as she had never felt before, there was mingled some shred of disappointment that the picture of a humble, happy home in time to come, when Silas should be her husband, which she had framed in her own thoughts, should be so rudely and suddenly thrust aside and another substituted in its place whose unfamiliar features she could not all at once accept as an equivalent for what she had lost. In engaging herself to this young carpenter, whose persuasive tongue and evident devotion had coaxed away her heart almost before she knew that she had lost it, she had looked contentedly forward to occupying the lowly position in life implied by such an union, and in none of her dreams had ever wandered beyond it. But, lo and behold! instead of finding that she had given her heart into the keeping of a good, commonplace young man, not overburdened with shrewdness, and with no particular energy of character about him—a man troubled with few mental processes beyond those connected with his plane and his saw; who never went to public-houses of evenings; who, when he had brought home his pound or five-and-twenty shillings at the week end, felt supremely content in the certainty that nothing more was expected from him; instead, I say, of having given her heart into such safe keeping, she found, to her intense surprise, somewhat, perhaps, to her dismay, that she had

entrusted it into the hands of a quite different sort of person. Was it not enough to startle any seriously-disposed young woman to hear her sweetheart burst suddenly into so strange a confession? Poor ignorant Esther hardly knew whether to laugh or cry. Had all this talk about the fame and fortune that the future was to bring—about the life in London above the reach of poverty, which was to be theirs in a few short years—any foundation in fact? or was it nothing more than the wild rhapsody of a self-deceived enthusiast? Then that jargon about "genius," and "high art," and "the sense of the beautiful," and "harmony of design"—what did it all mean? Esther could make neither head nor tale of it. And that evident spurning of old ties and old associations; and that wilful trampling underfoot of everything likely in the slightest degree to stand in the way of his ambition—were these the signs of a healthy, honest striving to better his condition in life? If all these burning dreams should come true, might not the time also arrive when, among other relics of bygone days, he might learn to spurn her heart, and find the distance between himself and her too great to be bridged over by his love? But no—she would not wrong him by dwelling on such a thought; she hoped, and would try to believe, that everything would turn out for the best.

I am afraid that Silas was somewhat disappointed at the quiet and undemonstrative way in which Esther expressed herself respecting the sideboard, on her introduction to that piece of workmanship; but then, Esther Sarel was a girl who never went into raptures over anything, and that was a fact which Silas had yet to learn. "It is very nice, and very pretty," said Esther, at a loss for words to express what she felt.

"'Nice' means namby-pamby, and 'pretty' is all bosh!" said moody Silas.

"Well, then, it's grand," said Esther resolutely. "I can't find the proper words. And what a deal of patience you must have had to cut out these leaves so beautifully—ivy, and holly, and mistletoe; and that bunch of juniper berries, for all the world as if we could pluck them. And on this side, there's the hop, and the vine, and the wild convolvulus, and all those delicate ferns; they are just wonderful. And all those dead birds, poor things! how natural they look! I know some of them, but not all. That's a snipe; and that one a partridge; and that a pheasant; and I think that's a quail—there was a picture of a quail in a book I had when a girl at home, and that is exactly like it. But, Silas, how did you ever contrive to make them look so soft and fluffy? I declare my fingers itch to pluck them. And that's a squirrel, peeping out from among those leaves, with an oak-nut between his paws. What a cunning, frisky, little darling he looks!"

"But, judging the work as a whole, Esther, how do you like it?"

"It is beautiful—very, very beautiful, Silas! I hope it will bring you in a lot of money."

Silas sighed, and then smiled. He was only half satisfied. He had fondly imagined that Esther would look on his work with the same appreciative eyes that he himself regarded it; with the eyes of an artist, in fact, able to discern those higher excellences, such as would never strike a vulgar observer; and to appreciate the poetic and harmonious spirit which ran through the whole design. But Esther's artistic sense had never been cultivated beyond a liking for a simple picture that could tell its own story, or a pretty vase for the chimney-piece. Her genius was altogether practical and housewifely—the genius that makes a humble home comfortable and attractive, that knows how to cook a joint, and bake excellent bread, and make a husband's wages go the farthest; but beyond that point it was not safe for Esther to venture.

Silas had to be content to take Esther as she was. If she did not always follow him when he indulged in his rhapsodical, imaginative flights, she, at least, fully sympathized with him in his honest ambition to better his worldly condition; and was content to trust her future into his hands, and to go on loving him with that blind, unquestioning devotion which only a woman can feel, and not she always. And Silas, in his way, was very fond of Esther, and would steal away for an hour, two or three times a week, and go and wait outside the side door of Irongate House till she came out. Then, arm-in-arm, they would wander off, and talk over their little love affairs, and part with a kiss—perhaps more than one; and Esther would go back demurely into the house; and Silas would hurry back to do a couple of hours' work before going to bed. So their courtship progressed, and they agreed very well on the whole. They had little tiffs occasionally, as was only to be expected, considering the dissimilarity of their dispositions; for Silas was prejudiced and crotchety, and Esther had a spirit of her own—as every girl ought to have.

(*To be continued.*)

IN THE LOTUS LAND.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "Through Holland," "The Bretons at Home," etc. etc.

Coptic Woman.

GRAPES did not grow in the streets of Alexandria. We could not stretch forth our hands and pluck them as we passed by. Apparently the Alexandrian muscats had no honour in their own country. It was not even the grape season, and whatever other luscious fruits the bazaars and market-places displayed, these had no place there.

It is certain that the greatest struggle for life we went through in Egypt was on first landing. A more motley crew than thronged the quays and swarmed our lower deck could scarcely be imagined. Seen from the upper deck, where, as we have already said, distance lent enchantment to the view, nothing could be more picturesque; but once amongst them, all charm and enchantment vanished. They seemed determined that we should land, not in sound condition but in fragments. All the ten tribes, or sects of the various nations composing the population of this our Lotus Land, seemed here represented, and the number of costumes and different-coloured turbans was amazing to the uninitiated spectator.

Passing through the streets, it was impossible not to draw a mental contrast between modern and ancient Alexandria; between the city of the present, with its more or less commonplace aspect and influence, and the city founded by Alexander the Great three hundred years before the Christian Era. To-day the city is so Europeanized that you can scarcely fancy yourself in Egypt. It has wonderfully changed since the bombardment of 1882, and new streets and squares of palatial buildings have sprung up on the ruins of the old. What that bombardment was we realised to some extent when we visited many of the forts, that have never been restored, where exploded

shells lay about amidst fragments of solid masonry that nothing but the modern art of warfare could have razed to the ground.

It is only when you penetrate into the Arab quarters, or mark the swarthy visions and the Oriental costumes worn by the natives that you feel the Mediterranean really flows between you and Europe.

So we thought and felt on our way to the Hotel Khedivial. The hotel porter towered above the coachman like an animated pyramid. Every now and then he turned and looked down upon us with a benign expression of protection a little irritating to our sense of grown-up manhood, as if he felt that we were trophies plucked from the hands of the enemy, victims rescued from destruction. At length we stopped in front of a large building, somewhat sombre and dull-looking, and not very imposing. Our pyramid descended, and waiters and manager appeared on the scene.

It is much the most comfortable hotel in Alexandria, but, emphatically built for a warm climate, is not suited to the cold days and nights which sometimes come even to the Lotus Land. The staircases and passages were chiefly of stone; the bedrooms were large and bare; there was a grey, chilly aspect upon everything. In summer the coolness is no doubt delightful: but it was now winter, and unusally cold for Egypt. Where, indeed, did the winter of 1890–91 not penetrate to? Before we again left these shores, the road between Jaffa and Jerusalem was blocked up with snow and impassable, an event hitherto unheard of. The winter climate of Alexandria is not to be compared with that of Cairo. On the other hand it is far pleasanter in summer. Whilst Cairo is languishing under the scorching winds of the desert, Alexandria rejoices more or less in a constant supply of cool air from the sea.

The dining-room of the hotel was a large building separated from the main structure. To make room for it they had evidently infringed upon the garden, which is now small, and given up to a few oriental trees, such as the banana and the palm—though the former is not strictly Egyptian—whilst a row of the cactus and the orange tree in large pots added their little charm to the scene. Above the surrounding houses the sky was as intensely blue, clear and bright as we only see it in an Eastern atmosphere.

How much we enjoyed the luxury of our first breakfast on shore let those realise who have gone through a similar experience. It is like returning to life and civilisation after the miseries and boredom and unrefinements of a close saloon: whilst to be freed from the perpetual motion of the sea seems like a return to Paradise. We scarcely realise the steadiness of our floors and tables, but thoroughly appreciate the whiteness of the linen, the well-polished silver, the excellency of the cook's artistic efforts. These were very good at the Hotel Khedivial. Like many of the hotels in Egypt, the custom is to charge each visitor so much a day, making no allowance for meals taken elsewhere: an arrangement very much in favour of themselves.

The daily charge at the Hotel Khedivial was sixteen shillings; and it is very much the same in Cairo.

Very few travellers make more than a twenty-four hours' stay in Alexandria on first arriving. For a general impression of the town and neighbourhood this is sufficient. The greater number of people, indeed, arriving at Alexandria in the morning, take the afternoon train for Cairo, anxious to hasten on to that world's wonder—that world's fair, from an Egyptian point of view.

At the hotel we were at once met with the unpleasant intelligence that Cairo was full to overflowing; no fresh arrival need attempt to proceed onwards without first having secured rooms. Egypt had

THE SAKIEH.—BUFFALOES DRAWING WATER FROM THE NILE.

never before been so crowded as this year. "We have had plagues of locusts, and we now have a swarm of Americans," remarked one of the hotel officials. Every berth in almost every returning vessel was taken for weeks to come. And still people were flocking in crowds and shoals to the Lotus Land, and still they came, for it seemed the only place within reasonable distance where winter could be forgotten. As yet the winter skies had been bright and blue and the air genial; but fate decided that an Egyptian winter should begin on our arrival: a miserable sirocco arose: and they had it colder than it had been known for many years. Nevertheless, to us, coming from the barbarity of an English winter, it was difficult to understand the pinched faces and shivering forms, the furs and great coats that were so much in evidence and seemed so necessary; and more than ever we were confirmed in the idea that to always winter abroad has

a weakening tendency. To us the skies were blue and bright, and the sunshine warm and dazzling.

To hear that Cairo was crowded gave us a shock from which we did not easily recover. If we had hoped for one thing more than another in going to the Lotus Land, it was that here we should escape from the rush and crowd of tourists that make travelling nowadays a sort of social warfare—little less than a species of inquisition to a sensitive temperament. We ought to have remembered that no spot of earth is sacred from the tourist; and that, whether we go to the top of the Great Pyramid or climb the summit of the Himalayas, we shall certainly hear American, and probably English, spoken. What else can happen if the inhabitants of the Great Continent come over in such frightful and persistent crowds to our smaller Continent? In Cairo it seemed to us that there were, at the very least, fifty Americans to one Englishman. The dahabeeahs going up the Nile to the First or Second Cataract were crowded, and the only cabins to be had for the remainder of the seasons were a few which accidentally became vacant: the places of those who, from illness or other causes, were prevented from carrying out their arrangements.

As the New World grows larger and our own Old World smaller, there will have to be a new departure—a new order of things—an international code drawn up by which the Americans will undertake to yield us quiet possession of our own on alternate years.

Of course there had been Americans on board travelling with us from Marseilles to Alexandria. They formed a large party, and filled up a whole table, and were all connected with each other by ties of birth or marriage. The ruling spirit of this party, a young lady dressed in satins and furs, was distinguished for her wonderfully black eyes and hair, and for a remarkable talent for making herself comfortable under all possible circumstances. All her dependants, in the shape of sisters, cousins and aunts, waited upon her as a courtier would wait upon his queen—equal devotion if not equal courtliness—and to do her justice, she repaid them with invariable smiles and amiability. But, to some ears the American manner of speaking English imposes a social gulf between the two nations far more difficult to bridge over than the Atlantic. The one, indeed, may be really accomplished; the other is impossible. Our fellow-travellers had transgressed in this matter as usual—rather more than usual; and Americans, as we know, have yet to learn that a modulated voice is quite as agreeable in man as in woman; but in all other ways they were neither aggressive nor unpleasant, and on the whole we had considered ourselves fortunate.

At breakfast, that first morning, at the Hotel Khedivial, we sat opposite to another American party, consisting of a mother, son and daughter. It would be rather complimenting the elder lady to suppose that she had made her fortune as a laundress; her appearance suggested nothing else. The son and daughter were a little more

refined in appearance, but had, without exception, the most unamiable faces ever seen. The daughter had commenced by not appearing at breakfast; and when it was half over, the son had reluctantly gone off in search of the truant. He had returned with the young lady, who followed him with "lingering steps and slow," and every token of annoyance and ill-will.

"Very strange I can't do as I like," she said, turning to her mother. "I don't want any breakfast, and now you've made me come down I sha'n't eat anything. You can't force me to eat."

"Then you'll be very stupid," retorted the mother. "I'm all for getting my money's worth out of people. It's included in the daily charge. Sixteen shillings a-day, and without wine, too. I call it imposition."

"Then why do you stop to be imposed upon?" snapped mademoiselle. "There are plenty of steamers going back to Europe."

"My love ——"

"Don't call me your love," interrupted the young lady. "I'm not your love. Pa was your love—at least I suppose he was, after a fashion. But it was funny love, such a cat and dog life as you led. *I'm* not your love — I'm only your daughter. I'll take good care never to be anybody's love. From all I've seen, you may just as well go into penal servitude as tie yourself up in the holy state of matrimony. Very holy, I must say."

FELLAH, MAKING ROPE.

"Hold your tongue, you wicked girl," reproved the mother. "A blessing for the man who would have married you if you never do enter the holy state of matrimony. You'd drive a saint into a madhouse with your temper and your goings-on. If ever I come to Europe again, it certainly won't be with you. I'd sooner stay at home first and confront a brazen serpent."

The lady evidently meant anything *but* a brazen serpent, but in the heat of retort she did not stay to weigh her words. It was not to be supposed that this interesting trio spent their days in cultivating this unfortunate tone of mind and conversation; life would soon have come to an end; but it was evident that amiability was not their strong point. For our own part, we saw them no more until long, long afterwards, when they, like ourselves, had turned their backs upon the Lotus Land.

We had stopped at a small station beyond Naples, on our way to Rome. The train was half empty; everywhere there was abundance of room. Our compartment was composed of seven seats; four on one side, three on the other. We occupied two seats, and two were taken by a German gentleman and his wife, very nice and quiet people. A fifth seat was taken up with our rugs and ulsters and a dressing portmanteau, which we had received special permission to keep under our own surveillance throughout Italy. Two seats were unoccupied.

No sooner had we stopped at the station than a town porter rushed across the line, tore open the door, and without even waiting to see how far the compartment was empty, hauled up these three identical people into the carriage, who had turned up again like the Eastern slippers, and then commenced throwing in their luggage. It is no exaggeration to say that there were fifteen or twenty packages, many of them of considerable size. Some were done up in dirty canvas or calico, and looked very much like the kit the sailor sometimes walks away with under his arm on returning from a long voyage. Mother and daughter sank into their seats, the son stood up literally embanked by his household gods. The train moved on, and it took him at least five minutes to stow and pile these away on every available spot above or below that the carriage contained. Then, having accomplished his task by a sort of miracle, he turned to us.

"And now, sir," said he, in that unpleasant tone which is more a command than a polite request, "if you will remove your coats and bag, I'll sit down."

"Will you tell us where to place them?" we returned. "You have taken up the whole compartment with your own affairs."

"I can't help that," he brusquely replied. "I must have that seat. In the first place, that bag is luggage; you have no business with luggage in a carriage."

"Stop the train," growled the ex-laundress, "and have it put in the van. A pretty state of things if we're not to have seats to sit down upon in a free country."

We are not a Samson, and even had there been room, to have removed the bag would have been a difficult matter. But consideration was thrown away upon these impertinent people, who evidently looked upon politeness and civility as signs of weakness.

"We have special permission for this bag to travel in our own sight and keeping throughout Italy," we observed, "and it certainly shall not leave the carriage. But if you can see any spot not occupied with your own things in which to place it, you are at liberty to move it." Upon which we took refuge behind our paper and said no more.

"I am not a railway porter," he remarked, "and I am not going to remove other people's luggage for them." Nevertheless he began re-adjusting his own goods and chattels, and finally in some way disposed of our bag.

"This is shameful," cried the mother. "A pretty state of things to cross the Atlantic and make the grand tour, and all for nothing but to be turned into railway porters. I never was so insulted in my life. Why don't you stop the train and have it put into the van, Adolphus James? I insist upon your doing it. I won't travel with it."

The young man raised his hand as if to grope the alarm signal.

"You'll be fined five pounds if you do," cried the daughter in the very midst of a yawn. "And as you can't speak French or Italian and explain yourselves, the chances are you'll get locked up. I won't interpret for you. It serves you right. You should have found out whether there was room before you got in. And if you want all this rubbish with you just to save a few francs, you should have a compartment to yourselves. People really might think you take in washing, and had been going the rounds. Serves you right."

OUR DRAGOMAN.

I am sorry to say that we distinctly heard the elder lady give expression to the vulgar word: "*Hussey!* I'll cut you off with a shilling in my will, if you don't mind what you're about. We're not going to be turned into railway porters for the King of Italy himself —and submit to it. I was *never* so insulted in my life."

All this time we had taken refuge behind our paper, and for all sign of consciousness might have been deaf and dumb. It was impossible to bandy words with such people. But it had at length become too much for the German's feelings, and he now spoke up.

"You are very rude, noisy people," he said, in very good English, though with a strong German accent. "I have never met anyone like you. We were quiet and peaceable until you came in. The train is half empty, and you might have taken another compartment. You have crowded this with such a cargo as I never saw in a carriage. In moving it about you have injured my wife's foot with your roughness. This gentleman, having received permission, has a perfect

right to have his valise in the carriage, and if you had rung the alarm you would only have been fined for your pains. Persons like you, who do not seem to study the convenances of Society, should remain at home, or hire compartments all to themselves. You are not people, but bears."

Perhaps he went a little too far, but his extreme frankness had the desired effect. The lady was so astonished that for two minutes she remained open-mouthed; then prudence gained the day, and she took refuge in silence. The young man, finding himself in the minority, collapsed; whilst the daughter with another triumphant "Serve you right!" opened a Tauchnitz edition, and became absorbed in the last new novel.

A silence of ten minutes ensued: the mother and son looking very much as if they would like to blow up the whole train with gunpowder. Then the lady suddenly growled out: "I think we might have some refreshment." Upon which the son hauled down a huge bag from the netting, which looked capable of containing half a hundredweight, and without further ceremony, they began their feast. After reviving the old lady's spirits with a strong dose of brandy and water, they brought out three huge bones, from which they proceeded to tear the meat with their teeth, as if they had in truth been the bears the German had described them

This was too much for human nature, and there are limits to the golden rule. The train fortunately stopped. We called up the guard, had our offending bag removed, and fled to an empty compartment and to peace and quietness. Our last glimpse of the strange trio revealed them gnawing at the three large bones, each bone firmly grasped in two hands: and we distinctly thought we heard three very bear-like growls. The German and his wife we never saw again, and we have often wondered whether they shared the fate of the bones.

These are the occasional incidents of modern travel. And though, as a rule, one happily escapes such pronounced aggressiveness, yet he who journeys far will meet with strange companions: whilst anything like refinement of thought and feeling will receive many a rude shock, that, as Monsieur M—— said at Concarneau, will make one appreciate more and more the repose and sanctity of home.

But to return to our Lotus Land.

We left this amiable trio disporting themselves at the breakfast-table, no threats of the mother on one side or commands of the brother on the other, inducing the refractory daughter to break her word and her fast. The day was before us in which to see Alexandria, and receive our first impressions of Egyptian life, its manners, customs and people.

The manager procured us a carriage and a dragoman. The latter is a necessary nuisance in Egypt, if you are a stranger to the Lotus Land. You had need be very careful how you engage them, and

the hotels will not always free you from their rapacity and imposition. Every step you take, every place you visit, seems a question of backsheesh, which many of the dragomans will administer with a lavish hand.

Our own dragoman, whose name was Alek, was perhaps no worse than his fellows, but had one great fault: we engaged him for a week, taking him with us to Cairo, upon the plea that Cairo being so full, we should find it impossible to hire a respectable dragoman on the spot, and at the end of a fortnight we had not shaken him off. He seemed to have been a Jack-of-all-trades and amongst other things declared that he had served in the English army. He professed to be a devout follower of Mahomet, and had made a pilgrimage to Mecca, and after some further ceremony yet to come was to receive certain distinctions which would raise him into the front rank of dragomans and the faithful. He was somewhat above the middle height, and had the dark, swarthy, olive skin and black eyes of the Egyptian. His expression was a mixture of cunning and frankness that was very singular and a little difficult to analyse. It gave one the impression that the man had been born frank by nature, but that the struggle for existence and contact with his fellow men had gradually brought about a certain cunning and deceit which so often comes to those who, as the saying runs, "have to do the best for themselves." In Egypt it would be almost impossible to escape contamination.

Alek was the possessor of two wives, as he informed us. Apparently they were frightfully jealous of each other, and were almost always fighting and quarrelling. If he smiled upon one, the other was furious; if he frowned upon both, both turned upon him and he had a bad time of it.

"I have had about enough of it," he said to us one day, "and mean to send one of them back to her mother."

This was uttered just as if he had been speaking of a bale of goods or a piece of furniture; but it is a very ordinary matter in Egypt, where a man has only to declare himself divorced before a certain number of witnesses, and the fact is accomplished.

Alek's English was anything but perfect, and often unintelligible. In one particular he was like an Irishman, and would never confess ignorance of anything; rather than do so, would give you absolutely wrong information. When confronted with his error, he would declare that we had misunderstood him. But it took us some days to find out that Alek was more or less of a humbug, and that sometimes when he professed to be guiding us, it was little more than the blind leading the blind. Yet he was no worse than his fellows, and in some respects perhaps was rather better. Like so many of his class, he looked as if he and fresh water were on very unfriendly terms, an impression probably due only to the swarthiness of his skin; otherwise, in his Oriental dress he was a picturesque

object. He was very proud of the colour of his turban, and had an excellent opinion of himself altogether.

This was the dragoman who presented himself to us for hire. He was not attached to the hotel, but the manager knew something of him and declared him to be respectable. He spoke plausibly, showed us good certificates, and the bargain was concluded. We engaged him merely for the day. He mounted beside the coachman, and we went forth to see the wonders of Alexandria.

These are much less than they once were. Of all the ancient monuments only Pompey's Pillar remains as some testimony to its former greatness. We made straight for it on leaving the hotel. Passing out by the Gate of the Nile, we soon found ourselves in front of the pillar, which has stood the test of time for fifteen centuries, and is still very perfect. It is built of red granite, rests on a massive pedestal and is crowned by a Corinthian capital, now a good deal worn away, and never quite completed. The pillar stands out boldly and sharply against the background of clear Eastern sky, and is finely proportioned. The ancients were seldom wrong in their architecture.

The pillar stands on a desolate piece of ground: a slight hill covered with rubbish and fragments of ruins, emblem of the lost greatness of the city. All its surroundings are sad, for it overshadows an Arabian cemetery, where drooping figures in attitudes inexpressibly mournful may often be seen beside a newly-opened tomb. Their peculiar wail of sorrow can only be compared to an Irish wake intensified. But all who are howling are not sorrow-laden. When you meet a funeral in the street you notice that some of the howlers are young boys who, wailing and cutting capers, seem thoroughly enjoying their task. The more noise, the more honour to the dead.

There were many groups in the cemetery this morning: women veiled and bowed and men in mourning. One woman sat solitary and apart near a tomb that contained her husband, for she was robed as a widow and held a willow. Altogether she looked a very picturesque object in her abandonment of sorrow. Little could be seen of her features; her head drooped and she bent low, and the willow leaves stretched far above her in graceful curves. She was quite still and motionless, apparently in the depths of despair.

The whole aspect of the cemetery was desolate—almost repulsive. We hurried through it, for it seemed, to an awakened imagination, fever-haunted—plague-stricken. The Arabs form at once the poorest and most picturesque part of the population. Their quarter of the town is the most squalid and crowded. The streets are full of small Arab children, to whom little care seems given. Many are afflicted with ophthalmia; but where this is not the case their little black eyes flash out and light up their little copper faces, which are often running over with smiles as they run beside your carriage and hold

PAPYRUS, AS WE SAW IT GROWING AT SYRACUSE.

out their little hands with the inevitable cry of "Backsheesh." It is hard to resist them, and it must be wrong to yield to this first step towards the idle and vagabond life so many grow into. Perhaps time will change all this, and raise them to something higher and better. Alexandria has scarcely become accustomed to her prosperity. At the commencement of this century she had fallen into absolute decay, and her wealth seemed gone for ever. But Mohamet Ali arose, a mighty man in the land. He may be called the regenerator of Egypt, for to him she owes much of her present success. Alexandria may well in gratitude erect statues to his memory and call streets and squares by his name. He was the founder of the present dynasty, and established his reign by the murder of all the Memlook beys in the citadel of Cairo. Born at Cavala, in Roumelia, in 1768, he began his prosperous career in 1803, when colonel of an Albanian Corps in Egypt. He prospered in all he undertook; wherever he went he was successful; like Cæsar of ancient or Napoleon of modern days, he seemed born to conquer; and but for the intervention of the European Powers would probably have changed the whole fortunes of the East. If he was ambitious he was also wise, and Egypt has cause to be grateful to his memory.

Of the present prosperity of Alexandria there is little evidence in the Arab quarter. The streets are crowded and you hear many cries. The water-carrier is conspicuous, with his curious skin slung over his shoulders. The seller of sherbet finds his market even in this poverty-stricken quarter—for it is not so abjectly poor in fact as in appearance. It forms a wonderfully stirring and animated picture. The very air seems instinct with movement. The different costumes and colours give you a kaleidoscopic impression; everything about you seems shifting and changing. You are almost dazzled and bewildered by the crowd and the din. In the distance you see a denser cavalcade slowly approaching. It is an Arab funeral of the poorer description. A long sort of platform upon wheels is being drawn by a patient horse or mule. Upon this the very frail coffin reposes. Seated on the platform are men, women and children, cross-legged, drooping, half or wholly veiled. Their attitude is expressive of sorrow and mourning, though evidently many are not grief-stricken, for they are looking about them and there is no sorrow on their faces wherever these are visible. These funerals excite no curiosity or compassion in the people. They are too common an occurrence, for they may be seen every hour of every day. The quarter is crowded and people are always dying. As soon as possible after the breath leaves the body it is consigned to the tomb. Cemeteries abound. In one open spot we saw more coffin-laden, women-laden wagons waiting their turn than we could stay to count.

It is, perhaps, in this Arab quarter that you obtain your greatest impression of being amongst the Orientals. Yet in Alexandria

something is constantly bringing you back to Europe. As time goes on this will become more and more the case; the Eastern element will disappear like the antiquities, and Alexandria, so much in touch with Europe, will become altogether Europeanised. But two things she will ever retain—the palm tree and the camel: as inseparable from Egypt as her sandy deserts, her clear skies.

The shops or bazaars in the Arab quarter were curious, and scarcely resembled the bazaars in Cairo, that great Eastern institution, which we picture in imagination as so gorgeous and so wonderful —almost laden with the enchantments of the Arabian nights—but which is in reality so disappointing. The bazaars in Alexandria showed forth the usual amount of gold and glitter and tinsel; of filigree and morocco work; Eastern burnous and red slippers; Persian rugs and hookahs; every species of Arabian and Egyptian woodwork and needlework. This fine and curious embroidery is the only industrial art that has been handed down to Alexandria from the prosperity of her early days. It grew to the highest artistic perfection in the times of the Caliphs, and was renowned throughout the civilised world. The coronation mantle of the Roman-German Emperors—preserved in the Treasury at Vienna—was worked by Arabians. Venice in her glorious days sent to Alexandria for her choicest silks. All the gold thread used in such lavish quantities in the brilliant days of chivalry, came from the East; and the Orientals long preserved the secret of making it in the greatest perfection. None could compete with them. It was manufactured from the finely-divided threads of the intestines of animals, a process not then known to the world at large.

That this art of embroidery has survived where so much else has perished is not very surprising. It is a quiet labour, requiring no special bodily exertion, and is exactly suited to the Eastern temperament, which loves indolence and inactivity. The men may sit cross-legged in Turkish fashion upon their floors and counters, and earn their daily bread without moving the whole day long; excepting at the hour of prayer, when he will spread his carpet and commence his devotions with all those curious genuflexions, all the apparent fervour, which is one of the striking and singular sights of the East. In the regularity of their devotions they set a good example to many a Christian community. The true follower of the Prophet would sooner miss his daily bread than omit his prayers.

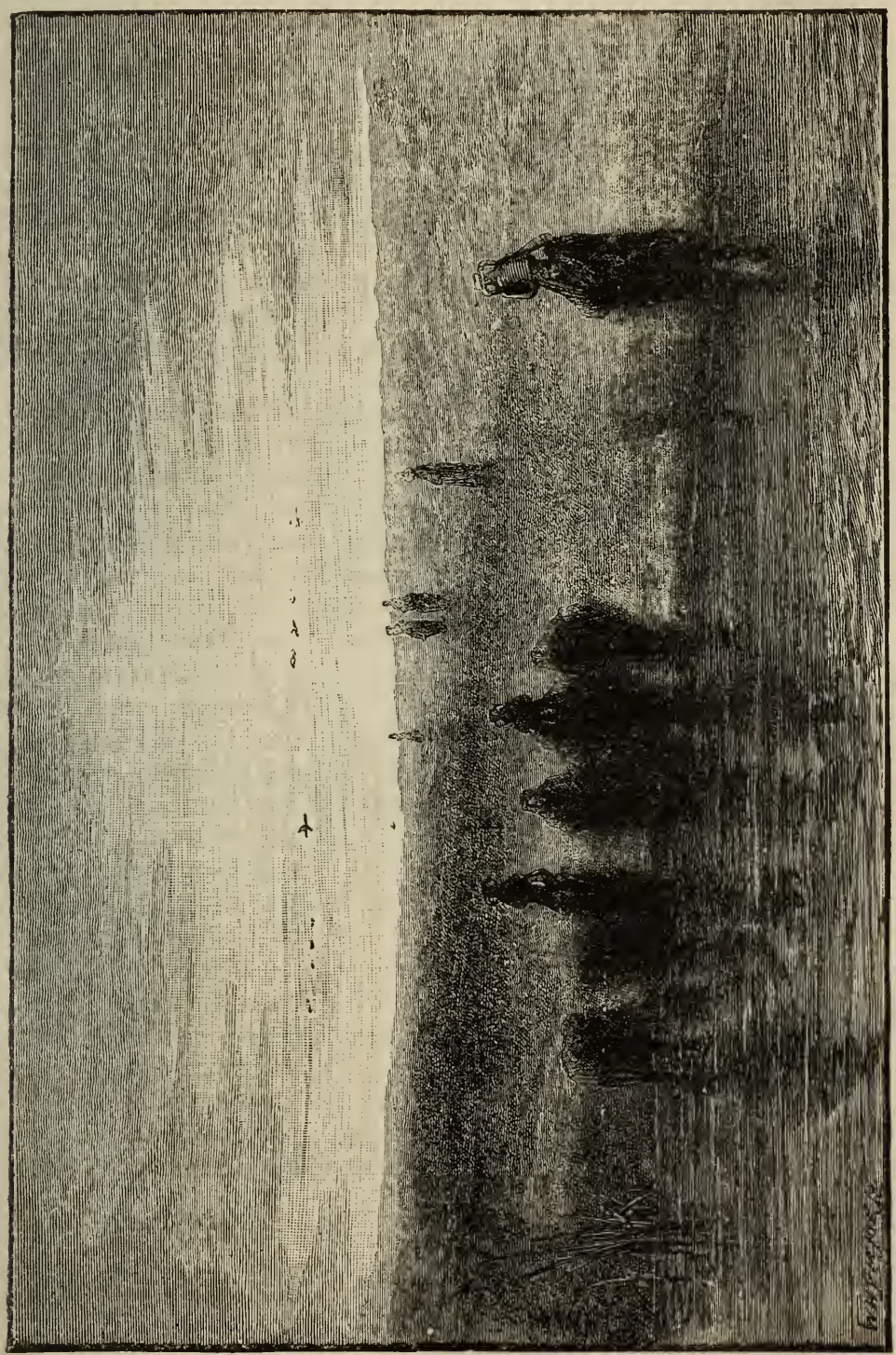
The fruit stalls formed a large proportion of the Arab trading. One whole square was given up to them: booth after booth displaying luscious fruits and dried dates picturesquely arranged, behind which the dark-skinned, keen-eyed Oriental presided in fez or turban. Here in their season you will find an abundance of delicious grapes, from which also an excellent wine is made; oranges in unlimited quantities, the small, sweet-scented Mandarin and the wonderful citron sending forth their perfume upon the air. The latter is as

exquisite and delicate as it is fleeting. The pomegranate also abounds; and the apricot, which is flavourless. Figs are very common, and apples, pears, quinces, plums and the cactus fig. The banana has become a native of Egypt only within the last ten or fifteen years. All these fruits in their season are artistically displayed, and are relieved by the fresh date, which sometimes is deep blood-red in colour, sometimes a pale, sickly yellow, and always harsh and astringent in flavour. This, like all other parts of the Arabian quarter, was crowded. As we left the carriage and perambulated from stall to stall, we were followed by a tail of Oriental boys and men, who seemed to think we were only there for their own profit or amusement. Whenever they became too thronging, a few cuts from Alec's riding whip—which he always carried and used indiscriminately—dispersed them for the moment, but they retired only to return in greater force.

The donkey-boys were of course very much in evidence, with their long-suffering animals—an institution in Egypt quite as much as the palm tree and the camel. If you are walking they will follow you persistently in the hope of being hired at last, upon the principle that continual dropping will wear away a stone, and are only to be got rid of by a cut from a whip or a well applied knock on the head with a stick. Men and boys seem to submit to the lash as if they felt it no degradation and were insensible to pain. They take it as a matter of course. Often when, as the days went on, Alec belaboured the shoulders of a man bigger and broader than himself, with all his might and main, we expected to see a sudden access of wrath, and a blood-curdling encounter, the monster took it as meekly as a child, and without the slightest thought of retaliation.

One of the few industries of Alexandria is carried on in a narrow street at the back of the Mosque of Ibrahim. It is a dull, sad-looking thoroughfare, and seated in rows one after the other a large number of men are plaiting the reeds and rushes that grow in the marshes, and manipulating the fibres of the date-palm, turning the one into matting, the other into rope. It is quite a national industry; and though not handed down from antiquity like the fine needlework, no doubt the ancients made use of their willows quite as much as the moderns, and possibly in the same way. It is an interesting sight, and peculiar to Alexandria. You may also see—not in one particular spot, but in many parts of Alexandria and Cairo and the country roads, the natives sitting cross-legged behind rows of sugar canes, breaking the large cane over their heads, which apparently have as much resistance as an Irishman's skull; and then cutting up the broken cane in small pieces five or six inches long. This they peel and eat, and seem partly to live upon. It is sweet and sickly, and disagreeable to any one who has not acquired the taste. Sometimes a customer will buy a whole cane, and carry it off over his shoulder after the way of a fishing rod.

Passing out of one of the gates that morning, we suddenly came upon our first view of the Nile, and gazed upon it not without



EGYPTIAN GIRLS COMING TO THE NILE FOR WATER.

considerable emotion. How could it be otherwise with this ancient and classical river? Its religious history is no less interesting than

its secular. It is the river of the Old World, and its banks were teeming with life, prosperity and civilisation, great towns and magnificent buildings were in existence, when the other countries and rivers of the world were as yet unknown. No river has ever created so much interest, so much controversy, given rise to so much travel and exploration; no river has such wonderful remains, so many vestiges of a past existence, almost another world and a separate people. It has been worshiped as a deity, and Egypt itself has been called the Gift of the Nile. To it the country owes its fertility, and to this day it regulates its prosperity. The Nilometer at Alexandria is watched with the greatest anxiety, and when the waters sink to a certain level, the people cease to pay taxes. Its source long remained unknown and a mystery, and is still doubtful. Some say that it rises far up in the Victoria Nyanza lake, others that it springs into life yet further south of the equator.

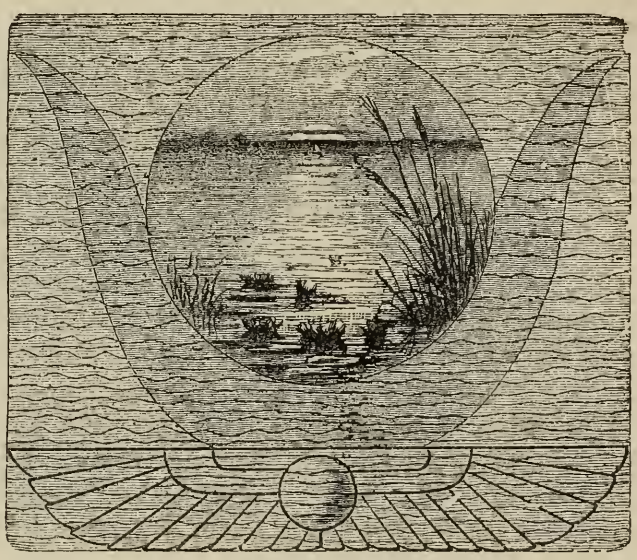
It is here that the lotus—the "blue lily" of the Nile—grows in greatest perfection, and it is here that most emphatically we are in Lotus Land; for though the lotus now grows in other waters, it originally grew in Egypt and there only. Once the papyrus grew here, but grows no longer; this beautiful plant is only to be found in the pools and waters of Syracuse, where we have seen it bending over the stream in graceful curves and outlines.

This morning we saw the river at its least interesting stage, from a classical and antiquarian point of view—where it is about to yield up its existence to the Mediterranean. A calm, broad-glowing stream reflecting the pale Eastern sky upon its surface, catching up the warm sunshine, and breaking it into a million flashes; giving no evidence of the turbulent cataract amongst the far off hills; the multitude of ruins and antiquities to be found upon its distant banks.

Here we saw nothing but a dahabeah or two moored to the banks, one of them belonging to the Khedive. Within a few feet a high dead wall was erected, and behind it was the Palace. Little of it could be seen; still less of the harem, where, in closely-sheltered gardens, well screened from the gaze of the world, the favourites, within doors and without, spend their monotonous existence. Well resigned to it, no doubt, as people generally are resigned to the lot which falls to them, with that fine spirit of adaptation that is one of man's greatest blessings. On the low-lying lands stretching far away on the opposite banks, there was little life and movement to be seen. A few palm trees stood out against the clear sky; and here and there a string of well-laden camels, the drivers seated upon their backs in cloak and turban, plodding patiently along with the swinging billowy movement so peculiar to them, reminded one, perhaps more forcibly than anything else, that we were on Eastern shores. Impossible, indeed, would it be to get on here without the camel. It is emphatically the beast of burden, and one day is flying along the desert, bearing its rider away from the approaching sandstorm,

which rises like a whirlwind, obscures the heavens and almost turns day into night; and the next may be seen drawing the plough or turning a waterwheel, or passing along a canal path, laden with rushes and sugar-cane. It yields both milk and wool, and in short, adds much to the prosperity and well-being of its owner.

The European element was more in evidence when we passed through the Rosetta Gate to the fashionable drive and promenade of the Alexandrians, along the banks of the Mahmoodebyeh Canal. Here the rich people of Alexandria most do congregate, as in Paris they do in the Bois de Boulogne, or London in Rotten Row. Of late years the merchants have grown rich and great, and pride themselves upon their well-appointed equipages, which they purchase in Italy or Vienna, with their high-stepping horses. The ladies dress very gorgeously, and many a costume is made in Paris. With all this it is curious to see the black coachmen driving in a tarboosh or red Egyptian fez. The scene is altogether a strange mixture of Eastern and European manners and morals, but it is gay and lively, and gives one a good idea at a glance of the rich and fashionable population of Alexandria.



THE LOTUS.

Passing away from this, you will presently reach the Isthmus separating the Island of Pharos from the mainland. Here exists the Jewish quarter; and the Jews are as much in evidence in modern as in ancient Alexandria. To the East of this is the New Harbour, to the West, the Old. There is a good deal of colouring and artistic effect in the district, though many of the streets are narrow and poor and squalid, after the fashion of all Jewish quarters in all parts of the globe.

The situation is striking. Both the harbour and the town-proper of Alexandria present a lively aspect. In the bay, which is so exposed to the North, and so filled with sand that larger vessels cannot enter it, one notices the barges with their white sails spread, the points crossing and interlacing each other like the wings of some monstrous sea-bird. Beyond lies the blue shimmering Mediterranean, beautiful ever, though very different here from those waters that wash the shores of Naples, with all their magnificent surroundings; where

Vesuvius casts his shadow and deepens the blue by day, and sends forth his tongues of flame by night; and Capri afar off looks like a dream mountain; and ruined monasteries, and deserted convents mark the times that have passed for ever in all that wonderful coast road which leads round by Sorrento.

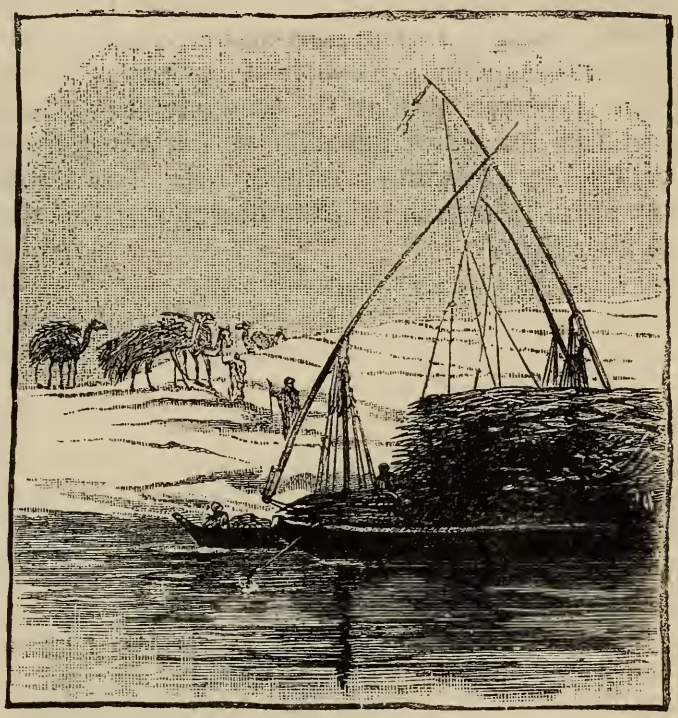
Here in Alexandria the elements of interest were very different; nature had done little; modern enterprise and past tradition—to these one had to turn: and these existed in abundance. In place of monasteries, the religious element is here represented by mosques and Coptic convents, and a few modern Christian edifices that have no architectural interest about them.

Turning your back upon the far-stretching waters of the Mediterranean, upon the low-lying stretches of arid-looking shore, and re-entering the town, a slender minaret guides you to the mosque of the Sheykh Ibrahim, in the centre of a small square, where windows of Mashrebîyeh work arrest the attention, and you hear not very far off the din and traffic of the New Bazaar. The mosque is a large, Eastern-looking rectangular building. One whole side is taken up by small shops, where the Arab sellers sit cross-legged upon their counters, sheltered from the sun and the sirocco by matting awnings held up by long poles. Above the mosque is a Musulman theological college. An outside gallery is formed by small columns supporting iron arches surmounted by a wooden balustrade. Above rises the small minaret on which rests an hexagonal gallery, supporting a cylindrical column crowned by a small bulbous cupola bearing a crescent. At the narrow, somewhat decorated doorway, are seated the guardians, whose business it is to take off your shoes and replace them by straw slippers if you wish to enter. The sacred floors must not be trodden by unhallowed feet, or sullied by the dust of the streets. Many of these men are venerable-looking, with long grey beards, their dark faces wrinkled with the cares of a long life. They might be any age over a century, and look as if they were direct descendants of the Patriarchs. Here and there one would make a splendid representation of the Wandering Jew. Some of their faces are remarkably fine, possessing a wonderful mixture of the religious and intellectual elements.

Few of the mosques of Alexandria are worth more that a passing visit, and cannot be compared with those of Cairo. One of them is named the Mosque of the Thousand-and-one Columns, but, if they ever existed, many of them have long since disappeared. Here the Church of St. Mark once stood according to tradition, and here St. Mark is supposed to have suffered martyrdom. The church was destroyed in 1219 by the Moslems under Melek-el-Kamel, at the time that the Crusaders were besieging Damietta. The Moslems would not spare the church though tempted by large offers. The body of St. Mark was in the possession of the Coptic convent, and they still profess to have it; but according to Leo Africanus and the

historians of that date, it was undoubtedly carried off by the Venetians in the year 828. The fact is recorded on the mosaics of St. Mark's, Venice. The body was stolen by the two captains named Rusticus and Tribunus, with the help of Staurgius, a monk, and the priest Theodorus, who, having charge of the sanctuary of St. Mark's, Alexandria, must have been bribed thereto.

Close to the tomb of Said Pacha, which is worth visiting, is the mosque of Nebi-Daniel, crowned by a cupola. It is one of the most simple of all, with plain walls and small square windows. But in the centre of a subterranean vault is a magnificent tomb, which the people of Alexandria confidently declare contains the body of Daniel the Prophet. Nearly all these mosques are built in the same style and with the same material: burnt brick of an excellent description, for which Lower Egypt is famous. All these materials come from Rosetta. The bricks, small and solid, are bound with a strong cement of mortar, a mixture of sand and lime.

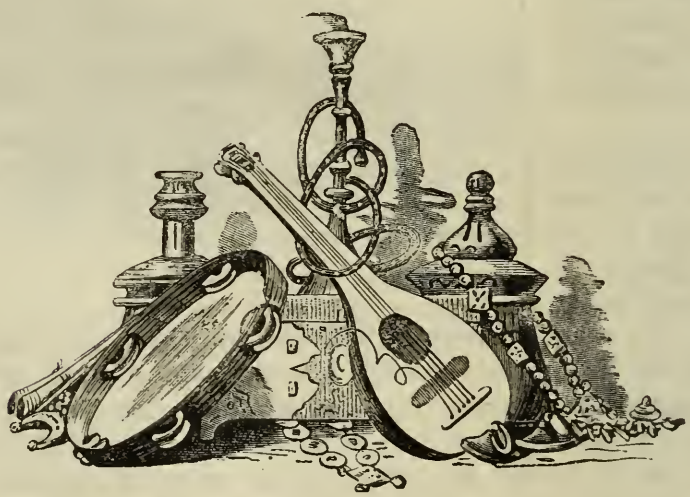


ON THE NILE.

Our dragoman, Alek, would have had us give a very cursory glance at these and all other matters. He seemed possessed with the spirit of the modern tourist, and evidently thought general effect was what we ought to aim at; an examination into details was too laborious, too great a tax upon the mind. Every now and then, when something specially interesting detained our footsteps, he would take refuge in resignation. If within a mosque, he would wander away to the guardians and exasperate them by offering them the smallest possible amount of backsheesh, remaining absolutely deaf to their growls and remonstrances, which were often accompanied by flashing eyes and eager gestures, suggestive of daggers and scimitars. Or he would stroll outside, and send the donkey-boys flying with a cut of his whip, which, alas, fell in equal shares upon boy and animal.

As we have said, Alexandria was a strange mixture of the European

and Eastern elements. The one was tame and commonplace enough; the other was full of life and movement, of colouring and interest. A motley throng crowded the streets. The importunities of the donkey-boys, the strange figure of the water-bearer, the arduous labours of the road-sprinkler, the curious Eastern cry of the seller of sherbet, all contributed to form a scene that has no parallel in European climes. It was dazzling and bewildering, and presently one turned away from it all to the quiet, far-reaching waters of the Mediterranean with a feeling of rest and relief. There one gladly watched the golden sun dip and disappear beyond the horizon: watched the crimson afterglow throw its deep red tones upon all; the flames that seemed to dart about the sky with such gorgeous effect, dyeing the white sails of the barges, and gilding the tops of the minarets within the walls of the town. This was the Mussulman's hour of prayer, and at the same moment thousands would be engaged in that act of devotion, which, however mistakenly offered, will draw down a blessing from the Giver of all Good upon all those who, out of an honest and sincere heart, offer up their worship according to their light.



THE THIRD FINGER OF THE RIGHT HAND.

I.

THE time was late autumn. All day there had been a dense fog in town (as my landlady's nephew brought word when he reached home from business), but it was not till well on in the afternoon that it spread outward and onward and gradually enfolded the pleasant London suburb in which I dwelt in its chill and stifling embrace. On such an evening a man might well be excused for hugging himself on the fact that he had no business to take him from home. It was a night for a rousing fire, for one's easiest chair and a favourite author—a night to shut oneself indoors, "the world forgetting, by the world forgot."

At that time I, the Rev. William Heritage, was a young man of five-and-twenty, fresh from a country curacy, and all unused to London life and London ways. My stipend was something under a hundred pounds a year, and, as I had nothing beyond it to depend upon, my mode of living had perforce to be regulated on strictly economical principles.

My landlady's clock had just struck nine on the particular evening with which we are concerned, when a vehicle of some kind, which had come down the street at a walking pace, stopped opposite my lodgings, and half a minute later a thundering rat-a-tat startled everybody in the house, myself not least of any. Presently in came Mrs. Daly, evidently quite in a flutter. "There's a carriage-and-pair outside, sir," she said, "with a coachman and a black footman, and a gentleman inside who wishes to speak with you."

Wondering not a little, I put down my book and, taking one of the candles, passed through the folding-doors into my bedroom, where it was the work of a minute to exchange my slippers for a pair of shoes and my lounging-jacket for a garment more befitting my profession. Mrs. Daly stood holding the front door open as I went out. The fog was no longer quite so thick and stifling as it had been earlier in the evening.

Crossing the narrow strip of garden and the footpath beyond it, I found myself at the open window of a brougham. A little distance away by the side of the horses stood the black footman.

"You are the Rev. William Heritage, I presume," said a man's voice, speaking to me out of the depths of the carriage.

"That is my name."

"The services of your office are required at a country place a little distance away. If, therefore, you will come with me, I shall esteem it a favour. The brougham will bring you back after you

have done what is required of you, and you shall be liberally remunerated for your trouble."

"But, first of all, I should like to know ——"

"Pardon my interrupting you," broke in the stranger, "but the errand which has brought me here is one that admits of no delay. We can talk as we go along. For the present, is it not enough for you to be told that your services as a minister of religion are urgently needed?"

The words implied a rebuke, and as such I felt them. "I am at your service," I said, with a little bow. "In three minutes I shall be ready to accompany you."

And, indeed, it did not take me longer than that to put on my outdoor things, and tie a muffler round my throat as some slight protection against the fog. The black footman held open the door of the brougham and closed it upon me; a few seconds later the horses sprang forward, and by the time I had settled myself in my corner, Alma Terrace had been left behind and we were traversing one of those great arteries of traffic which from every point of the compass converge on the Great City.

"If you have no objection, I will put this window up," said my unknown companion as soon as we were fairly under way. "These confounded fogs are enough to try the strongest of us."

He had kept well back in the brougham even when he had first summoned me to speak with him, and all I had been able to make out, and that vaguely, was a pair of piercing eyes and a black bushy beard and moustache. Now that I was shut up with him in the carriage, he was wholly invisible to me, for the fog was still so thick that the street lamps were merely so many blurred splotches of yellow flame, dimly discernible for a moment and lost the next. On such a night the utmost caution was needed on the driver's part, and our progress was necessarily slow. By-and-by, we left the last of the metropolitan lamps behind us, and plunged blindly forward along the unlighted country road, and as from time to time we seemed to take a sharp turn to right or left, as the case might be, I judged that we had diverged from the great highway by which we had left London, and were now traversing one or other of the less frequented cross-roads which go to make up such a puzzling network to those who are unacquainted with them.

But by this time I was becoming not merely impatient, but uneasy. Since putting up the window my fellow-traveller had remained utterly silent. I had expected to be informed en route, not merely whither we were going, but for which particular office of the Church my ministrations were required; but not by a word did my companion break the dark silence between us. At length, the tension became such that I could bear it no longer. "Have we much farther to go?" I demanded, not, perhaps, without a touch of urgency in my voice.

Before answering me, my companion proceeded to rub the dim,

opaque surface of the window with the door-strap, and then leaning forward, he peered through it as if in search of some recognisable landmark. "Another half-hour ought to bring us to our destination," he presently remarked as he sank back into his corner.

This was so far satisfactory, but my curiosity was not appeased. "May I ask to be enlightened as to the particular purpose for which my services are needed?"

"Simply to read the Burial Service. For nothing more, I assure you."

"To read the Burial Service at this hour of the night!" I exclaimed in amazement.

"The necessities of the case are such as to override all subordinate considerations," he replied in a tone which seemed to repel further questioning.

Evidently there was nothing for me to do save to await the course of events and be guided by circumstances as they might arise.

After what seemed to me a much longer time than half an hour, but may not really have been so, the carriage came to a halt at what seemed to be the lodge entrance to a park. In any case, there was no one there to admit us, the footman having to descend and open the gate for the carriage to pass through. A further drive of five or six minutes along a smooth gravelled road, and then we came to a second and final halt.

The black servant opened the carriage door and my companion alighted. "Our journey is at an end, Mr. Heritage," he said; whereupon I proceeded to follow his example.

I noticed that the carriage had drawn up close to what looked like a side door, or servants' entrance, to some country mansion. Scarcely had my feet touched the ground before the door in question was opened from the inside, as though our arrival had been looked for, disclosing a dimly-lighted flagged passage, with great blotches of damp and mildew showing here and there on the walls. "This way, if you please," said my companion as he advanced into the house. The moment I had crossed the threshold the door was shut softly behind me. My guide led the way to a room at the end of the corridor. It was a chilly-looking apartment, with its uncarpeted floor and painted walls. Its sole furniture consisted of an antique oaken table with a couple of chairs to match. However, a cheerful fire was burning in the grate, and on the table was a tray with wine and other refreshments. The room was lighted by an oil-lamp, the wick of which was turned partly down, as, indeed, was that of the lamp in the corridor, but with what object I was at a loss to determine. "Will you kindly wait here for a few minutes and meanwhile help yourself to some refreshment?" said my companion. "You may rely upon it that I shall detain you as short a time as possible." With that he left me to myself.

My first act was to pour out a glass of sherry and my second to

plant myself with my back to the welcome fire. Not till we were in the room, and he was talking to me had I been in a position to have a fair look at my companion, and even then there was little about him which would have helped me to recognise him at any future time. He was tall and well-built, and wore a long fur-trimmed overcoat, the hood of which, after the Canadian fashion, was drawn over his head, leaving little of his features visible save the afore-mentioned piercing black eyes and bushy beard and moustache. In years gone by I had been a good deal mixed up with amateur theatricals, and as I stood there, balancing my glass of sherry, a certain conviction forced itself upon me, which was, that the beard and moustache worn by the man who had brought me there were false and merely assumed for the purpose of disguise. It was a conviction which by no means tended to reassure me, but, fixed as I was, it was impossible for me to draw back. All I could do was to quietly await the next act of the strange drama with which I had so unwittingly allowed myself to become mixed up.

Not long had I to wait. In something under ten minutes my conductor, so to call him, was back again. He had discarded his furred overcoat for a long black funereal-looking cloak, which, however, like the coat was hooded, so that nothing more of his features was visible now than had been before.

"Everything is in readiness," he said. "May I ask whether you have brought a Prayer-Book with you?"

"I did not omit to do so," was my reply.

"Then, if you will kindly follow me."

After traversing two or three dimly-lighted corridors without meeting anyone, we came to a glass door which my guide opened, and with that we found ourselves in the open air. The fog had lifted in part, but the night was still intensely dark.

"If you will permit me to lead you," said my companion, "it may save you the risk of a stumble."

So, hand in hand, we advanced slowly through the darkness. Here and there I could make out the forms, dimly outlined, of what I took to be clumps of evergreens, among which the path we were traversing wound in and out. Once or twice my guide paused, as if uncertain which particular turning was the right one.

"Here we are, at last," he said, after a few minutes, in an unmistakeable tone of relief. "Be careful of the steps; there are exactly twelve of them."

Letting go my hand, he led the way. I hesitated for a moment, but for a moment only. It was too late to think of retreat, but it would still be competent for me to draw back at the last moment and refuse my services, should circumstances render it desirable that I should do so.

At the bottom of the flight of steps my guide pushed open a heavy low-browed door, and, holding it wide with one hand, motioned to

me with the other to enter. As I crossed the threshold a singular scene met my gaze. The place in which I now found myself was a low, vaulted structure, not more than eight or nine feet in height, and apparently of considerable antiquity—the small red bricks with which both the walls and roof were lined having acquired a worn and crumbling look, as if through the slow action of many years. In the middle of the vault stood a group of three people, all of whose eyes I could feel concentrate themselves upon me at the moment of my entry. All three figures were cloaked and hooded after the fashion of my conductor, but with the hoods drawn even more closely over their faces. One of them was a woman. Of the two men, one held a lighted lantern breast-high, another being near him on the ground. There was no other light than that given forth by the lanterns.

Laying a detaining hand on my arm, my companion whispered in my ear: "The burial for which your services are desired is about to take place here and now. The corpse is that of an infant—a male child—only a few weeks old. I hope you will not for a moment imagine that there has been any foul play, or that the child's death was due to other than natural causes. Such was not the case, I can solemnly assure you; indeed, were it needful to do so, I could adduce the medical certificate in proof of my statement. On the other hand, I at once admit that there are imperative family reasons why the death and burial should be kept a profound secret from the outside world. More than that, I feel sure, you will not ask me to say. I may, however, add, in case you may have any scruples on the point, that we are standing on consecrated ground—this being the crypt pertaining to a small private chapel, now in ruins, built some three or four centuries ago by the then lord of the manor. And now, come!"

We advanced towards the group of three, I carrying my hat in my hand. One of the two men, not he who held the lantern, greeted me with a silent bow. Through the folds of his hood I caught a glimpse of a long grizzled beard. Then the lady—for that she was such I could not doubt—favoured me with a grave obeisance. Upon that I became aware that we were standing round a small grave which had been dug in the earthen floor of the crypt, and on craning forward, I saw that a tiny coffin of polished wood had been lowered into it, but that the name-plate, if there was one, was hidden by flowers.

All being evidently in readiness, I took the Prayer-Book out of my pocket, opened it and began to read that most beautiful of services. I had taken up a position at the head of the grave and close by the man with the lantern, and the light shone on my book—not that I needed it, knowing as I did, the service by heart. My voice was the only sound that broke the silence, save that now and again a stifled sob broke from the cloaked lady, who had gone down on her knees by the side of the grave at the moment I began to read.

The service went on; the solemn words, "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust," had just been pronounced, in response to which the man at my side had sprinkled a little earth on the coffin, when the door of the crypt was pushed suddenly open and another cloaked and hooded figure, that of a female, came swiftly forward and sank on her knees by the side of the other.

"Judith!" exclaimed he of the grizzled beard, in a tone of stern displeasure, as he made a step forward and gripped the newcomer by the shoulder. Then he threw a quick glance at me as though annoyed that the name should unwittingly have escaped his lips.

"Oh, papa, forgive me!" she exclaimed. "I could not help coming; indeed I could not. He was mine—my own—and he has gone from me for ever!" She lifted her head, as if in appeal, to her father, and as she did so her hood fell back for a moment, leaving displayed a pale but very beautiful face, of a somewhat Jewish type, of which the large black eyes were just now streaming with tears.

With an exclamation of annoyance the man drew the hood forward into its place. "So be it," he said, in harsh accents; "but there must be no scene, remember." Then he fell back and motioned me to proceed with the interrupted service.

A few minutes later and the last "Amen" was pronounced. I shut up the Prayer-Book, put it back into my pocket, and took up my hat, which I had deposited beside me on the floor. All this time the newcomer had only succeeded in controlling her emotion by a supreme effort, as she knelt there, with drawn-up shoulders, her slender fingers spasmodically interlocking and unlocking themselves again and again, but by no other sign betrayed the tempest at work within.

"Sir, I thank you with all my heart," said the elder man. "Pray oblige me by accepting the enclosed," and with that he pressed an envelope into my hand. A few minutes later I was back at the carriage. "If you will take my advice, Mr. Heritage," said my conductor at parting, "you will never say a word to anyone of the events of to-night." With which he shook hands with me and bade me a cordial farewell.

II.

YEARS passed—a number—till the events in connection with that foggy night had so far receded into the past, that whenever, by any chance, they recurred to my memory, they seemed to have scarcely more substantiality than a dream. I had sought for no clue to the mystery and none had ever been forthcoming. It was an episode which had ended with itself, entailing (so I ignorantly imagined) no after-consequences likely in any way to affect me. Meanwhile promotion had come to me. I had been appointed to the incumbency of a church in the West of England, had married, and was blessed with one daughter.

On a certain autumn morning I found myself, in company with a

friend, on board the Rhine steamer, bound from Biberich to Cologne. After taking stock of our fellow-passengers, Maxwell and I settled ourselves on a couple of camp-stools, prepared to enjoy to the full the lovely panorama which was gradually unfolding itself before us. Some time had passed thus when I was startled by hearing a male voice behind me say, "Judith, my dear, are you quite sure that you are sufficiently wrapped up?"

It was a name I had never heard spoken since that memorable foggy night, and the mention of it thus unexpectedly brought back the whole scene vividly to my mind. It was impossible not to wish to see the Judith who had been thus addressed.

After waiting a few seconds, I turned on my camp-stool on the pretence of giving a last look at a certain ruined castle which we had passed a minute or two before, and found myself confronted by a very beautiful woman, who, in company with a military-looking man much older than herself, was seated a little distance away. The movement on my part drew her eyes to me. Her gaze, which at first had traversed my features as indifferently as it might have done those of anyone who was an utter stranger to her, returned to my face after a moment or two with a sort of puzzled inquiry in its regard, and then, after considering me for a little while, a sudden light of recognition flashed into her dark eyes, and the same instant she dropped her veil and turned to address her companion. If I had been in any doubt before as to the personality of the beautiful stranger, that flash of recognition on her part would have effectually dispelled it. But even without that I should have known her again; for the woman whom I had seen for a little while under such strange circumstances so many years before—the Judith of that night—had a right hand, the third and fourth fingers of which, owing to some curious freak of nature, were exactly the same length, and the right hand of this other Judith on the Rhine steamer, which for some reason or other was just then ungloved, had the same singular peculiarity. It was impossible to doubt that they were one and the same person. I at once turned away and was careful not to look in her direction again; but if I were to say that I did not feel a strong desire to fathom the secret of her identity, I should be stating what was not true. As already remarked, the destination of myself and friend was Cologne, but a number of our fellow-passengers were going no further than Coblentz, among them being the military-looking gentleman and his companion—wife or daughter, I was at a loss to tell which. As the steamer slackened way, they pressed forward among the rest who were preparing to land. Judith—I knew her by no other name—still had her veil down, and I noticed that she never once seemed to glance in my direction.

Pointing the two out to Maxwell, I expressed to him my wish to find out who they were. As a consequence, he rose and went forward with the crowd. At the end of five minutes he was back.

"Name on portmanteau, Lord Elvedon; name on trunk, Lady Elvedon," he remarked sententiously as he resumed his seat.

One of the first things I did after reaching home a fortnight later, was to write to a certain nephew of mine in the Civil Service, who went a good deal into society, asking him to ascertain for me who Lady Elvedon was before her marriage. The answer came in the course of a few posts. Judith Catherine, Lady Elvedon, was a daughter of the late Mr. Cornelius Dixwade, who had been a partner in a well-known firm of metropolitan bankers. On referring to *Debrett*, I found that Lord Elvedon was at that time in his fifty-fifth year; also that he had no son to succeed to the title and estates.

Something I had learnt, but not much; and certainly I was far from expecting that a third and last chapter of my early romance, if I may call it so, had yet to unfold itself. But so it was.

III.

THERE was again a lapse of some years, in the course of which I had removed to London, where I was now the rector of a Church in the suburbs. It so fell out that my daughter, who by this time was eighteen years old, was desirous of being photographed, and with that end in view, beguiled me one day into taking her to a certain studio of repute at the West-end. There we were waited upon by a particularly handsome young man; and in due course, a couple of successful negatives were secured. Some two or three weeks later the portraits came home, and my wife's sister, who was staying on a visit, was so pleased with them that nothing less would satisfy her than being herself photographed at the same place. Accordingly, taking my daughter with her, she set out the next fine forenoon for the studio.

The day's experiences were talked over at dinner, and it was then that I banteringly asked Milly whether the same handsome young fellow who took her portrait had taken that of her aunt. Milly's response was a blush and an inquiry—which indirectly answered my question—whether I had noticed a peculiar malformation, so to call it, of the right hand of the young man in question. No, I replied, I had noticed nothing of the kind. Then it came out that the peculiarity to which she referred lay in the fact of the third and fourth fingers of his right hand being exactly the same length. I was far more struck by what she thus told me than she had any notion of. Never, save in the case of Judith, Lady Elvedon, had I met with, or heard of, a hand formed after a similar fashion. So much and so frequently did my thoughts dwell on the matter, that at length I decided to pay the young photographer another visit, and satisfy myself with my own eyes that his hand was really shaped as my daughter averred it to be. In order to do this, an excuse of some kind was needed. The readiest and most straightforward one that I could think of was to go and be photographed in propria persona.

Well, I went, and was duly posed and focussed by my young friend, who, I found, had by no means forgotten the occasion of my previous visit. Having satisfied myself that what my daughter had said about his hand was strictly the fact, my next object was to elicit from him some particulars about himself. This I had not much difficulty in doing, although there was a certain air of reserve about him, but it may have been in some measure owing to my cloth that he answered my questions as frankly as he did. (He has told me since that there was another reason, of the existence of which, however, I had not the slightest suspicion at the time.) When I left him I was in possession of the following facts connected with his history: His name was Bruce Warren. His parents had emigrated when he was a few months old, and he had been brought up in the States. His father had died about a year before, and he and his mother had then returned to England. As for the strange formation of his hand—he had been born so, but he was certainly not aware that any member of the family, either on his father or mother's side, was marked by a similar peculiarity. I had sought the information without having any definite object in doing so, and now that I had got it, I could not see that it was likely to be of any value to me.

One thing, however, it served to do—it turned my thoughts to Lady Elvedon, who had been in them but rarely of late years, and brought back, as freshly as if they had happened only the day before, every little feature and incident of my two meetings with her. Then, all at once, I made up my mind to seek an interview with her ladyship. I had read in the newspaper an account of the death of her husband about two years before, and through other channels I had heard that she was very wealthy and was noted for her extensive charities. At that time I was deeply interested in pushing forward a certain charitable scheme, and I said to myself, "Why not call upon the countess, aud try to secure her name as a lady patroness?" Next day saw me at Trevanion Square.

Her ladyship received me very graciously, and after listening to what I had to say, at once acceded to my wishes in the affair. She was still very beautiful, but worn and sad-looking, and was dressed in deep mourning. Did she recognise me, or did she not? I asked myself, for her manner told me nothing. It was a point, however, as to which I was not long to be left in doubt.

"Are you quite sure, Mr. Heritage," she said, with a faint but meaning smile as I rose to take my leave, "that the furtherance of your charitable scheme is the only object which has brought you to Trevanion Square to-day?" Then, without waiting for a reply to her question, she continued: "I recognised you at once, although I have not seen you since that day when we accidentally encountered each other on board the Rhine steamer."

"But your ladyship had seen me before that day, or you would not have recognised me then."

"Yes: neither you nor I can ever forget where and how we first met. But although it was natural enough that I should know you again, I have often puzzled myself with trying to guess how you came to know me, for, if you remember, on the occasion of our first meeting I wore a hood which almost wholly hid my face."

"The hood slipped back for a moment and allowed me a brief glimpse of your ladyship's features. Then, again, your father addressed you as 'Judith,' and I heard Lord Elvedon, as I presume him to have been, call you by the same name on board the steamer. Furthermore, if your ladyship will pardon my allusion to it, I recognised you again by a certain peculiar formation of your right hand."

"Ah, yes, to be sure. It was very stupid of me never to have counted on that probability, but I have grown so used to my hand being as it is, that I scarcely ever think of it as being different from the hands of other people."

"It is somewhat singular that only the other day I should have met with a person whose right hand is fashioned in the same way as your ladyship's."

"Such a coincidence is not merely somewhat singular, but very extraordinary. It is the first time I have ever heard of such a thing. If I may be allowed to ask, who and what is the person in question?"

"By profession he is a photographer—a very handsome and gentlemanly young fellow—and his name is Bruce Warren."

"Bruce Warren!" gasped her ladyship, with a look which made me fear she was about to faint. I was on the point of ringing the bell, but she motioned me not to do so. "And you say that this young man's right hand is framed after the fashion of mine?" she said presently, with a sort of questioning wonder in her voice. I bowed gravely in assent. "It is strange—it is very strange," she murmured. "And the name, too! Can it be nothing more than an extraordinary coincidence, or can it be that——" She left the sentence unfinished, whilst an inward shiver seemed to run through her.

There was a little space of silence, and then her ladyship spoke again. "I must see this young man, Mr. Heritage. It is absolutely essential to my peace of mind that I should do so. Can you not make some excuse for calling on him again and take me with you? Only, if I accompany you, he must not be told who I am, nor anything about me."

"That is a matter of easy arrangement," I replied. "All that is needed is that I should call at the studio again on the plea of wishing to be photographed in a different style."

Accordingly, before I left it was arranged that I should be at Trevanion Square at eleven o'clock the following morning, when her ladyship would be in readiness to accompany me to the photographer's.

I was there punctually on the stroke of the hour, and five minutes

later we were on our way in an unpretentious brougham, which had nothing about it that would furnish a clue to the rank of its owner. Said her ladyship to me: "What I should like you to ascertain for me, if you can contrive to do so, is whether the name of the young man's father was Jabez Warren, and if so, whether he, the father, was not, many years ago, head keeper at a place called Dunwithie Chase, a large property in Midlandshire."

Lady Elvedon's hand was resting on my arm as we were ushered into the studio. Young Warren came forward to receive us, and the moment her eyes rested on his face, I could feel her begin to tremble in every limb. But a veil hid her features, and I hastened to find a seat for her.

As I went on to explain to Warren the reason which had taken me there again, I had a consciousness that from behind her veil her ladyship's eyes were scanning him keenly. As it happened, no one was there but ourselves, and my sitting was soon over. It was not till Warren emerged from the dark chamber into which he had hurried with the negative that I said to him: "You will, I am sure, pardon my inquisitiveness when I assure you that it is not dictated by idle curiosity," and thereupon I proceeded to question him with the view of eliciting the information required by her ladyship.

The young fellow drew himself up, a little proudly as it seemed to me, and it was with a touch of heightened colour that he said: "My father's name *was* Jabez Warren, and the position mentioned by you was that which, as I have been told, he occupied up to the time he emigrated to the States."

"And your mother's baptismal name is Charlotte, is it not?" said her ladyship, with a sort of wistful eagerness in her tone. They were the first words she had spoken since entering the room.

"That is my mother's name, madame."

Then her ladyship stood up and lifted her veil. For a few seconds the two confronted each other in silence. In the eyes of one I read nothing but surprise and frank admiration, but in those of the other there was a look which, at the time, I was utterly at a loss to fathom. Then, as my own gaze went from face to face, a certain possibility flashed across my mind, a possibility so wild and strange that for the moment it turned me dizzy. Then her ladyship spoke.

"I am the Countess of Elvedon," she said. "I knew your mother many years ago, before she left England. I have a very strong motive for wishing to see her again now that, as I have been given to understand, she has returned. Will you not oblige me with her address?"

"Certainly, madame. I should be failing in my duty to my mother not to do so."

A few minutes later her ladyship and I were on our way to the address at Hammersmith with which Bruce Warren had furnished us. "I hope you will not object to my leaving you for a short time,"

said her ladyship as the brougham drew up at the door of an unpretentious, semi-detached villa of the ordinary suburban type. "I will endeavour to make my stay as brief as possible." That she was in an exceedingly nervous and highly-strung condition was plainly evident. As a matter of course, I begged that she would in no way shorten her visit on my account. The footman, meanwhile, had ascertained that Mrs. Warren was at home and her ladyship now alighted and went indoors.

She was gone a little more than half-an-hour. When she rejoined me her veil was again lowered. "Home," she said to the footman, as he held open the door of the brougham. We drove back to Trevanion Square in silence.

"You must come indoors, Mr. Heritage," said her ladyship at our journey's end. "I have much to tell you."

Needless to say my curiosity had been greatly excited by the morning's proceedings, and as her ladyship's words seemed to point to a probability of enlightenment I gladly complied with her request.

"The circumstances attendant on our first strange meeting in the old crypt so many years ago," began Lady Elvedon, when we were seated together in the drawing-room, "must often, I doubt not, have dwelt in your afterthoughts, accompanied by a wish that you could find a key to them. At length the time has come when what has hitherto been a mystery to you, need be one no longer; indeed, an explanation is due to you for more reasons than you are aware of. Besides which, I am quite sure that what I am about to tell you will be held as sacred by you in the future as that which you have known in the past has been."

What Lady Elvedon had to tell me in the course of our interview must be set down here as briefly as may be.

Lady Elvedon, as the reader is already aware, was the daughter of Mr. Dixwade, a wealthy London banker. It was in the course of her first season that Lord Elvedon was introduced to her and although he was undoubtedly much taken by her, the season came to an end without any proposal on his part. In the course of the ensuing winter Miss Dixwade paid a lengthy visit to an aunt in Scotland. While there she fell in love with a certain Lieutenant Bruce Abrey, who, on his part, was equally enamoured of her. The result was a secret marriage after the fashion which is still held to be valid in Scotch law. Three weeks later Lieutenant Abrey was ordered abroad with his regiment and presently Miss Dixwade, as she was still believed to be, went back to her home in the south.

At the first party to which she went after her return, she again met Lord Elvedon. That his lordship had by no means forgotten her was proved next day when he called upon the banker and made a formal offer of marriage. Mr. Dixwade's most ambitious dreams seemed on the eve of realisation, and to simply say that he was astounded when his daughter told him it was impossible that she

should become Lady Elvedon, is but faintly to shadow his state of mind. Then, under pressure, the truth was told. On the scene that followed, we need not dwell.

Some two years before this, the banker had bought Dunwithie Chase, the former home of an old but decayed family, together with the grounds appertaining thereto. Since that time the house had stood empty, except for a caretaker and his wife, and it was there that in an access of rage Mr. Dixwade now sent the daughter, who, to use his own language, had "irretrievably disgraced herself and him." There she remained immured till her child was born, the secret being known only to the girl's parents, to her brother, to two or three old and tried servants, and to the family doctor.

Within a month after the birth of the child, a letter bearing a foreign postmark and addressed to Miss Dixwade, which had been sent on from London, was received at the Chase. Under the circumstances the banker took upon himself to open it. It proved to be an announcement of the death of Lieutenant Abrey, who had been mortally wounded in action, and had died two days later, but not till after he had dictated to a comrade a last message to be despatched to his wife when all was over. The shock of the news proved too much for Judith, who was still very weak and ill. For several days to come she was delirious. When her senses came back to her she was told that her child was dead. In reality, her own child was still alive. The child at whom she was allowed to take a farewell look as it lay in its coffin, being that of Jabez Warren, the head keeper, whose birth had been almost coincident with that of her own.

Mrs. Dixwade, the banker's wife, was a woman of strong religious convictions, whom nothing would have induced to sanction the cruel deception which her husband, in furtherance of his own ambitious ends, and with the help of his son, conceived and carried out without compunction. In the full belief that the dead infant was her daughter's, Mrs. Dixwade insisted that the burial should take place in consecrated ground, and with the customary religious rites, nor from that point could anything move her. To this fact was due the summons which took me to Dunwithie Chase on that never-to-be-forgotten foggy night.

Time went on, and Judith's wounds began slowly to heal over. She went abroad with her mother, and when she came back, a year later, the ever-faithful Lord Elvedon proposed for the second time, and was accepted. As Judith said to herself: the husband of her love was dead, her child was dead, and all the happiness was gone out of her life; if her marriage would gratify her father and tend to make an estimable man happy, why should she allow her own feelings to stand in the way of her doing so? But not till the story of her first marriage had been told to Lord Elvedon would she consent to become his wife. Happily his constancy proved equal to the test.

She never regretted her marriage, she told me. Time brought with it no diminution in her husband's affection for her; and, in the course of years, that subdued happiness came to her which, as reasonable beings, is, perhaps, as much as any of us have a right to expect in this world of change.

It was the mention to her of my having accidentally encountered a young man whose right hand was shaped similarly to her own, coupled with the fact of his name being Bruce Warren, which not merely re-opened in her heart a wound which, as she thought, had been healed for ever, but caused a strange wild hope to spring to life in her bosom, from the full contemplation of which she shrank in fear and trembling, so much did it dazzle her mental retina. But it was impossible that she should sit quietly down and leave unsolved a mystery which, for aught she knew, might vitally affect her. Hence her visit to the studio and subsequent interview with Mrs. Warren.

In Lady Elvedon the head keeper's widow at once recognised the "Miss Judith" of those far-away days at Dunwithie Chase, and it needed but little to induce her to reveal all she knew with regard to the nefarious plot of which the banker's daughter had been the victim. As a matter of course, Jabez Warren, who for some time had been desirous of emigrating, was liberally remunerated by Mr. Dixwade for his share in the affair.

Lady Elvedon had found her son—he had come back to her, as it were, from the tomb—and in so far she had garnered a measure of happiness which sufficed to fill her long-empty heart almost to overflowing. But the widow of the Earl of Elvedon was a personage of note, and for the sake of the name she bore, it was deemed best that the details of her romantic story should not be told to the world—that little world of Society which is so censorious and prone to regard with suspicion, and worse, anyone whose feet have ever strayed beyond the narrow line of demarcation within which its votaries are expected to confine themselves, or, if they fail to do so, to guard the fatal knowledge as a secret which must never be divulged. When, therefore, it became known that the Dowager Lady Elvedon had chosen to adopt a handsome young photographer—an American by birth—as her probable heir, Society merely shrugged its shoulders and set down the act as a further proof of eccentricity on the part of a childless woman who had more money than she knew what to do with.

You will not think it strange, perhaps, that Bruce Abrey (as he is now called) and I see a great deal of each other, when I tell you that he is my son-in-law.

A CHURCH WINDOW.

Not a stately-painted window
All ablaze with red and gold,
Full of high symbolic meaning,
Telling tales of days of old.

Nothing to excite the fancy
Or to charm the artist eye,
Naught but dust and damp and mildew,
Shutting out the glad blue sky.

No fantastic traceries dainty
Circling lights of mystic form ;
Only diamond panes, bespattered
With the drift of many a storm.

Yet this misty old church window
Conjures up in fair array
Scenes of beauty, gorgeous pageants,
Glittering in the noon-tide ray.

Noon-tide ray of childhood's visions—
Were they real or only dreams ?
Looking back, each in its brightness
Than the rest more lovely seems.

Fact and fancy sweetly blending—
What was there, what seemed to be,
And this unstained transept window
Brings back all the past to me—

When a little maid, on Sundays,
Seated in the gloomy aisle,
Gazing round on walls and tablets,
Fairy-land I trod the while.

Once again I see the galleries,
Curtained pews and pulpit grim,
And the great brass candelabrum,
And the casements bare and dim.

And a flood-tide of dear memories
Drowns the interests of to-day ;
I am not a grave-grown woman
But a careless child at play.

E. Rhodes.

THE MASQUERADE BALL.

By Ada M. Trotter.

EVERYONE agreed that the suggested mode of celebrating Hallow-e'en by a Masquerade Ball was just as nice as it could be, yet the announcement left many young faces not a little perturbed, even anxious.

For we at our College out west boast a hard-working constituency; but our strong point is certainly not over-full purses.

Notwithstanding this limitation, we girls were bent on a judicious mixture of missionary work with our fun this year. Our College is established on the co-education basis, and the boys certainly did "cut up" last Hallow-e'en disgracefully, making it uncomfortable for professors and students for a long time afterwards. So this year, you see, we girls made up our minds to do something to entertain them and keep them from indulging their mischievous proclivities. Of course, we can't understand where the fun comes in of the stupid things boy students do on Hallow-e'en, but we *do* want to stop it if we can, and that was the reason why we made up our minds to celebrate it with a Masquerade Ball this year.

The boys were in raptures at the idea, and set about hiring costumes for the great event. Some of the richer girls did the same, but as for us—well, we had no money, and at first sight it simply meant being shut out from the whole thing.

Of course, as misery loves company, we all met disconsolate in Loeta's room. If anyone could console us it would be Loeta, but to our surprise she did not attempt anything of the sort. She and Addie, the bright Kansas girl, looked as gay as robins, and "What are you going to be?" became a mutual interchange.

We sat round the room, Loeta smiling on us from her perch on the window ledge. The twins, big young women of twenty-one, cast hopeful glances in her direction. As they said, "It was worse for them than for the rest, for they were two, not one, but had only one purse between them; the contents of said purse when raked fore and aft producing only one dollar."

How could *two* masquerade dresses be bought for one dollar?

Kitty Pringle, however, was worse off still, for she laughingly produced five cents as her all for immediate current coin.

"One can hardly go far astray on five cents," was her somewhat rueful remark.

Kitty, like the rest of us, was working her way through College; so when this is considered, it will be readily understood that the time to spare for getting up a ball costume on odds and ends was scant

enough. I can tell you, we girls who work our way through College *want* education!

But to go back to Loeta's room. Addie, our inspiration, was not the least put out at the empty purses displayed before her.

"Of course we shall all go to the ball, and of course we shall get up dresses somehow," said she cheerily. "You," to the twins, Maggie and Bessie, "are the only ones with money to spend. I consider a dollar riches. The rest of us must manage by borrowing one thing and another. We've all got something we can lend one another. Loeta here must be a nun. That won't cost anything, just a long cloak, a shirt-front and a veil. That's easy enough. But now for the rest of us."

Her quick eye, travelling round the room, lighted upon Loeta's curtains, drawn over her bookshelf, a dark, rich red.

"Just the thing for draping," she exclaimed, "and how well the colour suits Kitty!"

"In a moment the curtains were in service, and Kitty's dark head rose from a mass of graceful folds.

"What are *you* going to be, Addie?" chorus.

"Oh, I'll go as Ceres. I've done it before. All I want for that is a white gown, some grasses and a sickle. I shall do well enough—if I can borrow a sickle! The thing is, what are the rest of us to do?"

Her eyes were on the twins, who, in turn wore an agonised expression. One dollar and two big girls to dress on it. No wonder they groaned.

The College bell clanged. Was it the remembrance of the Greek class awaiting the students that gave Addie the brilliant idea?

"Greek ladies!" she cried. "Let's go and ask the Professor how they dressed."

They caught the Professor on the wing. Of course he was busy, that goes without saying; but equally of course, he was not beyond recall, mentally speaking. In answer to the inquiries, he walked to his bookshelf, and took down several books from his classical library. In some of these were figures exquisitely draped.

"Greek ladies it shall be," cried Addie, as she rushed off to her seat. "Girls, you can have lovely costumes out of your dollar."

The week went by, and we busy girls were more busy than ever. How we arranged our dresses, and got our sewing done seems something of a miracle now it is all over and we look back upon it. Never mind—we were all ready on Hallow-e'en, and met in Loeta's room for a general overhauling by our artiste, Addie.

Loeta, the nun, passed first under the critical eye. Next came Joan of Arc, in a vest, spangled with bits of tin; quite a fine appearance she made, too, on nothing but ingenuity. Addie herself, as Ceres, was perfectly lovely, and could not be mistaken for any one else, as "Ceres" was carefully sewn on her belt in grasses. Loeta's curtains

turned our pretty Kitty into a charming "Portia," and here were the twins transformed into graceful Greek ladies.

"Dear me! what may be done with one dollar, when you possess 'a frugal mind!'" cried Addie, in triumph, turning the Greek maids about. "Let me see:—eighteen yards of cream-cheese cloth at five cents per yard, ninety cents, two masks at five cents apiece, ten cents; sum total, one dollar. No one would believe it who did not have a realising sense that 'necessity is the mother of invention!'"

In point of fact the Greek dresses were considered the most beautiful costumes of the evening. The twins had good figures as well as brains, and had skilfully copied the classical designs. The long folds hung to a nicety, the scarfs were gracefully thrown over the shoulders, and they had brought all their miscellaneous stores of brooches and studs into requisition to fasten the folds over the arm and on the shoulder. For belts they had borrowed some gilt curtain links from a kindly neighbour, which made a very "joyful effect," and the "tout ensemble" was universally voted perfect.

Ceres had borrowed a sickle from the same kind neighbour, so that the party leaving Loeta's room for the Gymnasium Hall of the College felt themselves to be very well caparisoned indeed.

It is not necessary to follow them farther, into the company of Hamlets and others of fame in history and Shakespeare. It is enough if their little difficulties, and the way they got over them, may suggest to other girls that fun can be had without spending a large sum of money on a toilette. For this is what we used to call, as children, a real, true story, and they are all real, hard-working girls, but as fond of fun as any girls I ever knew.

As for the boys, not a bit of mischief was done on Hallow-e'en by any of the College boys; so you see the Masquerade Ball was a success in more ways than one.

WHO RANG THE BELL?

ONE of the strangest stories I have heard was told me by an aged gentleman who had spent his youth in the provincial city where the event related by him had occurred. I will give the history as he told it to me, only altering the name of the chief actor in the terrible drama and suppressing that of the town. I may add that this suppression is not, in this case, the mere trick of the professional fictionist. The actual name of the criminal and the bare facts of his crime, may be found in any catalogue of famous trials. But the man belonged to a respectable family; a relative of his—in his day a fashionable literateur and popular divine—found it advisable to modify his own cognomen to veil so sad a connection, and it is possible—nay, probable—that some of the line still survive who might be pained by any public returning of this dark page of their record.

Therefore, we will give the family name as Mildon, and their abode as the populous and gay town of X—.

The leading part in the little drama is played by one Charles Mildon, a fashionable young gentleman, mixing in respectable society, of popular manners and many accomplishments, but also, unfortunately, of extravagant and reckless habits and, it seems clear, of those darker shades of vice which frequently underly these.

He lived alone in quiet, genteel lodgings, where it appears that the character he maintained was fairly good. If at times he got into debt, he presently got out of it, owing to the good offices of an old bachelor uncle who had repeatedly come to his rescue; but whose patience, young Mildon felt, was fast wearing out.

This uncle, Mr. Mildon, senior, inhabited a small house in a lively, well-frequented part of the town. He was an elderly man, slightly crippled and otherwise so invalided that he never left the upper flat of his abode, where he was served and attended by a faithful old housekeeper who had been with him for many years. She and her aged master were the sole inhabitants of the dwelling.

There came a time—it was rather late one evening—when people passing by the abode of Mr. Mildon, senior, became aware of signals of distress from the first-floor window. Having succeeded in arresting somebody's attention, the old gentleman, in a very excited manner, proceeded to explain that he felt sure there was something grievously amiss in his lower premises, and to request that assistance should be fetched to his rescue, to enter his house and discover the true state of matters. A curious and eager crowd soon secured the presence of the proper functionaries. They proceeded to break open

the hall-door, thinking, probably, to come upon nothing worse than an inebriate cook or the devastations of a bungling burglar.

But a single glance round the interior changed the aspect of things. Faces grew pale and solemn, and defensive missiles were grasped, the excited crowd was pressed back, and further help summoned.

From mouth to mouth went the grim whisper—"Murder!"

In less than half an hour, it was noised abroad all over X—that a terrible and mysterious tragedy had been enacted in the house of old Mr. Mildon. His housekeeper's dead body had been found just behind the hall-door, and farther up the passage, at the head of the kitchen stairs, lay the corpse of another person, readily identified as a respectable old body who had occasionally visited Mr. Mildon's housekeeper.

It was only to be expected that the old gentleman's nephew was speedily on the scene. The succour of his aged and infirm relative, so awfully left alone, naturally demanded that.

But young Mr. Mildon had also some information to volunteer.

During the afternoon of that day, he had himself visited his uncle. He remembered the exact hour of his arrival, for while awaiting admittance he had casually glanced at the clock in a neighbouring steeple. The housekeeper had opened the door as usual. He had noticed nothing special about her, but then he had noticed little, going straight upstairs to his uncle. With him he had sat chatting for nearly an hour, during which time he had observed no unusual sound in the house. Some sounds, however, he observed, might easily pass unnoticed, owing to the roar of traffic in the street below.

But he had further to narrate that his visit had been brought to a premature conclusion, and he thought this might shed some light on the mystery.

While he and his uncle had been conversing, the door-bell had rung violently. His uncle had wondered who the ringer might be and they had both listened for the opening of the door, or rather for its closing, as it shut heavily, reverberating through the house. They had listened in vain, and young Mr. Mildon had thought he would go downstairs and see if the summons had been attended to. He had gone straight to the street-door, had opened it, only to find nobody! Thinking that the ringer might have retired a few paces, young Mildon said he had stepped out into the street, and looked to the right hand and to the left, but in vain. While he was doing thus the hall-door had suddenly closed behind him, banged as he had then believed by a draught of wind. His hat had been shut within the house, left, in short on a chair in his uncle's room. He had, he said, hesitated for a moment what he should do: he presumed the housekeeper had gone out, marketing, possibly taking advantage of his visit to do so without leaving her master alone: therefore any ringing on his part would be as futile as the runaway ring had been, so he had decided to go quietly, and hatless, to his own lodgings,

which were fortunately not far off, intending to return in the course of the evening, when the housekeeper would have resumed her post. He had actually been on his way back, when the excitement in the street apprised him of the horror which had been enacted in his uncle's house.

Young Mr. Mildon's communication was certainly important. It opened up two or three matters:

Had the housekeeper really been absent from the house at the time of the runaway ring?

If not, what had been the hindrance to her answering it?

Young Mr. Mildon was asked why he had not called her, instead of answering the door himself? Was it because he had thought it likely she was out? He answered at once that he had not thought about it: the bell had rung and it had been neglected; he had gone to the door simply as the most direct and natural thing.

Another question was: "Who rang the bell?"

Was this mysterious runaway the same who subsequently returned and committed the dreadful crime? Had his heart failed him on the first occasion? Or had he gained any inkling that the house just then had a stalwart guest as well as its usual feeble and aged occupants? Mr. Mildon did not see how this could be. He himself had not approached any of the windows during his visit. His uncle had sat in his accustomed chair by the window; a watcher outside might have observed the old gentleman turn to speak to somebody in the room. But there had certainly been nothing to show that this interlocutor was other than the old servant.

Mr. Mildon, the uncle, confirmed his nephew in every respect. There was young Mildon's hat on the chair, where he had left it. The old gentleman had little to add. After his nephew had left him to attend to the ringing bell, he had heard the street-door slam sharply; and, looking from the window, had seen his nephew go off, bare headed, and had guessed accurately enough at the apparent state of matters. He had returned to his newspaper-reading, and had not troubled himself further for some time. Then it occurred to him that his housekeeper was late in bringing up his tea and he had rung his bell—had rung it again and again, with as little effect as the runaway ring had produced! At last he had managed to hobble out of his room and as far as his stair-head, whence, looking over the banister, he had caught a glimpse of the skirts of the prostrate woman behind the hall-door. His only idea had been that his old servant had been seized with a fit, and he had at once given the alarm. From the stair-head it was impossible for him to see the other prostrate figure at the top of the kitchen stairs.

Young Mr. Mildon expressed the liveliest interest in the mysterious ringing of the bell. He seemed to lay great importance on that point.

Another difficulty was presently found attaching to this tragedy:

It was impossible to gain any conclusive idea as to what had been the weapon which had produced such deadly results. In the case of each woman the fatal wound had been a blow on the skull—so direct, so well-aimed and so incisive that it had needed no repetition. But doctors differed as to what instrument was likely to effect its purpose in the peculiar way manifest. It seemed that no clue to the identity of the criminal was likely to come from this direction.

Another moot point was, the possible motive for the crime. Its two victims were respectable old women, little likely to provoke enmity of the violent kind. The motive could scarcely be plunder, for nothing in the house had been removed, or even tampered with. Spoons and other silver table-articles lay on the kitchen dresser, just in the order in which the housekeeper herself had evidently arranged them. Also, there was a large sum of money on the premises, for the elder Mr. Mildon had considerable house property in X——, and as it was just after quarter day his recent receipts had been large, and he had delayed to bank them, a fact which might well have been suspected by many people. This money was kept in an old-fashioned bureau, at the back of Mr. Mildon's room. It was found intact, and the old gentleman himself could testify that there had been no attempt on the part of any stranger to enter his apartment. If anybody had entered the house with this object, why had they not effected it? The crippled invalid upstairs would have been even more easily disposed of than the old women below. One detective suggested that the old gentleman had never left his chair by the window, whence any deed of violence might have been seen by passers-by. But another replied that such a murderer as this would scarcely have been defeated in this way, since a few ingenious sounds on the stair-head would certainly have easily decoyed the old man to the door of the apartment.

"Gentlemen," said the younger Mr. Mildon, "the great question is: Who rang the bell?"

Among the detectives and legal functionaries who met in conclave with the very few "witnesses" who had any testimony to offer, there was one young man who filled such a subordinate place that he had scarcely any right to speak in the councils of his seniors and superiors; and certainly he received very little encouragement when he ventured to suggest that he had his own doubts as to the innocence of young Mr. Mildon himself.

The others scorned him. Had not young Mildon come upon the scene of his own free will and volunteered a statement which set him in the line of suspicion? "He could scarcely help that," murmured he of the doubts; "for, even if his uncle had forgotten or overlooked his visit, his hat would have been found in the house and he would have been called upon to account for it."

It was further urged that the singular absence of apparent motive became, in the case of young Mr. Mildon, an absence of all motive

whatever. He, of all people, was most likely to know of the money his uncle had in the house, and where he kept it; yet he had certainly been in the old gentleman's room, everything there had been at his mercy, and still the invalid was safe and his store intact. To these pleas, the young man, whom we will call Talford, could find no answer; yet he did not say he surrendered his suspicions. He was silenced but not convinced.

Months passed on, and the great crime committed in the little house in X—— seemed likely to be relegated to the list of unsolved mysteries. Talford himself had ceased to take any active interest in the matter; and the impression which had once been so strong upon his mind was wearing faint, so that probably, in time, he himself would have grown incredulous of it.

This Mr. Talford had a watch which gave him a good deal of trouble, and at last he took it to a friendly shopkeeper, a skilful mechanician, who, he thought, might cure its aberrations. The man looked at it carefully—said he thought he saw what was wrong—a rather peculiar defect—and proceeded to rummage in a drawer for a tool he needed to remedy it. He did not readily find it, and summoned his wife to his aid. While they were looking for this minor implement, he remarked by the way that he did not see his best hammer either. Talford, who was standing idly by, was aroused by the woman's answer, which came in the form of this enquiry :

"Have you ever had it since you lent it to young Mr. Mildon?"

Her husband thought not, now he came to think of it. Talford struck into the conversation : "What was the hammer like?"

"O, not an ordinary hammer—a watchmaker's hammer—like this," and the shopkeeper produced a tool, which Talford saw at once seemed well adapted to produce those fatal and peculiar wounds which had aroused so much speculation.

"Do you use these tools much!" he asked carelessly.

"Not very much, or I should have missed my best one sooner. I should think it is nearly a year since I lent it to Mr. Mildon."

That signified that it had been in his possession for some time before the murders.

Talford took leave of the friendly shopkeeper and hastened away. His old impression was now as vivid as ever, and he had something more tangible to back it. He was resolved on a bold stroke. He would take counsel with nobody, but would venture a great deal and win or lose all.

He put a pair of handcuffs in his pocket and bade a comrade accompany him on a piece of important business. They wended their way to the street where the younger Mr. Mildon lived in lodgings which he had occupied for a long while. Talford left his comrade to wait on the pavement, and repaired to the house alone.

"Was Mr. Mildon at home?" he asked of the woman who opened the door. Yes, he was at home in his own room. Then the visitor

would go to him there; he need not be announced: when Mr. Mildon saw him he would understand.

Young Mildon rose from his writing-desk on the entrance of his unexpected guest. His face was perfectly unconscious, without either surprise or alarm. For one moment the two men looked at each other in silence. If Talford's conviction wavered, certainly his determination did not.

Laying the "darbies" on the table he said:—

"Mr. Mildon, I am prepared for violence, but you will oblige me if you will quietly produce the watchmaker's hammer with which you murdered your uncle's housekeeper and her friend."

Whether it was the sudden revelation of the discovery of the much-debated weapon, or an idea that Talford would never have acted as he did without some strong evidence to justify him, cannot be explained. But young Mildon, without a word of protest, turned on his heel, went to a chest of drawers, unlocked one, and displayed to Talford the terrible implement. It lay among his handkerchiefs and neckties. He had never even cleaned it. Dry blood was on it, and there were one or two adhering hairs. Yet what seemed such an utter carelessness had come nearer to achieving security than any amount of restless precaution might have done!

The whole of Charles Mildon's original account was proved to be perfectly true.

He had only omitted its most important parts!

It was true that the old housekeeper had admitted him and that she had appeared just as usual.

He had omitted to say that he had instantly felled her to the ground with a blow which needed no repetition. That he had next been startled by the appearance of another old woman, coming up the kitchen stairs, but that his surprise had not unnerved him for the prompt commission of a second murder, which had formed no part of his original plan.

Then he had passed by the two dead women, and gone to his uncle's apartment. He had found the old man seated at the window as usual, but on this he had reckoned, and had laid his plot accordingly. After a little conversation, he had asked for a small money loan. His uncle had so often been complaisant that he had little fear of a rebuff. Had the uncle left the window to take a few sovereigns from his bureau, his nephew would have felled him to the ground and possessed himself of the whole hoard. But to his surprise and discomfiture the old gentleman proved utterly obdurate. Instead of lending the money, he gave him a lecture, loading him with reproaches. The nephew showed a submissive front, wondering all the while, what other dodge he could invent to entice his uncle from his window seat. One occurred to him at last. An anxious and despondent man is often thirsty. He knew his uncle kept divers liquors in a cupboard at the back of the room.

"Well, uncle," he had said sadly, "you can't think how your words upset me—and your severity is such a disappointment to me, I really feel quite faint. You won't give me any more help, you say? I will not ask it. I will ask only for a drink of something—even a glass of water. You will not refuse to give me that?"

"You may take it for yourself," the uncle had declared. "You know where the bottles and glasses are kept. It is part of your abominable idleness that an active young fellow like you should sit there asking a poor old cripple to hand him a drink."

To keep up appearances, young Mildon had gone to the cupboard and helped himself to some beer. Then he had resumed his seat. To wait for his uncle to move, could be, of course, but a question of time, and the stakes he had already risked were too terrible to allow of any impatience. Leaving personal interests aside, he had striven to divert and interest the old gentleman in local gossip and political debate and was flattering himself that he was allaying his uncle's irritation in the most satisfactory manner, when he had been suddenly confounded by a brisk, peremptory ringing of the street-door bell. His uncle had at once vaguely wondered who it was likely to be, coming at that particular hour, when he was seldom disturbed. The nephew had wondered, far less vaguely, what course he had better pursue, since he knew too well that there was no living person below to attend to that bell. Of course, he expected a repetition of the ringing. There had been a sound in the first as if the person producing it would not brook long delay, nor readily give up.

In his desperation, young Mildon caught at his uncle's wonder who it could be, and reiterated it. Then he made a feint of listening, and remarked that the housekeeper did not seem on duty, he would go and attend to the door himself. Accordingly he had rushed away, past the two corpses in the hall, and had opened the door warily, that the caller should not catch a glimpse of the horrible sight within. He had trusted to some dark inspiration of the moment to get quit of the malapropos guest. To his astonishment, nobody stood on the doorstep. Probably this somewhat shook even his iron nerve, for instead of retiring again, with the sufficient explanation of a run-away ring, he had stepped out upon the street to reconnoitre, not however, forgetful to draw the door behind him fairly close. Then it had unaccountably slammed, and retreat, hatless and utterly defeated in his nefarious objects, had been the only course left him. It had at least, given him opportunity to consider his position, and assume the part of an innocent "witness."

Once fairly at bay, under the energetic promptitude of Talford, he dropped his mask for ever. And his subsequent passage to execution was very straight and short.

There is much to reflect on in such a story. Did the door bell ring only in young Mildon's guilty imagination, and was his idea vivid enough, according to some modern theories, to impress his uncle's

mind with a similar idea? A sudden draught will often close a door left slightly ajar. There is nothing unnatural or even unusual in that. Some will be inclined totally to dismiss our telepathic suggestion and to fall back on the simpler one of a mere runaway ring. Admit this, and we have at once, in its time and circumstance, a marvellous coincidence with the needs of the occasion.

And then we have to admit another coincidence in the slamming of the door. Neither that nor the ringing of the bell were in the least remarkable in themselves. They were the most commonplace of occurrences. All their wonder lies in the part they played in this tragedy.

Does not the multiplication of coincidences tend to suggest the existence of a law not fully manifest? A whole philosophy may underly the answer to the question "Who rang the bell?"

WHEN MY SHIP COMES HOME.

Song.

WHAT will there be when my ship comes home,
When my ship comes home in the morning?
Top o' the tide o'er the crest of foam,
Danger and distance scorning.
Oh, there'll be crowns for the lads to spend,
And rings for the girls' adorning,
And there'll be a gift for every friend—
When my ship comes home in the morning!

What will there be when my ship comes home,
When my ship comes home at nooning?
All the fields where the children roam,
Full of the scents of Juning!
Oh, there'll be pipes for the boys to play,
And bells that the girls set tuning—
And cakes and ale as we turn the hay—
When my ship comes home at nooning!

What will there be when my ship comes home,
When my ship comes home at even?
Over the spur of the reef's sharp comb,
Under the darkening Heaven!
Oh, there'll be a treasure for me, aboard,
Won safe through dangers seven;
Golden heart of lover and lord—
When my ship comes home at even!

G. B. STUART.

THEN SHE ADVANCED WITH THE SKIRTS OF HER NIGHT-ROBE HELD DAINTILY BETWEEN THUMB AND FINGER, AND DANCED ONE FIGURE AFTER ANOTHER WITH HER IMAGINARY PARTNER.

THE ARGOSY.

MARCH, 1892.

ASHLEY.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER III.

ST. OUEST.

THE scenery around St. Ouest was charming, but the town was odious. Town indeed! it was nothing but a hamlet, with two hundred houses in it, and a gutter, a yard wide, running through the middle of its principal street, after the approved custom of French towns. St. Ouest lay in a remote valley, not far from the Eastern Pyrenees, which could be seen in the distance on a clear day, and to gain it from the high road you had to encounter a remarkably steep descent and a sharp turn, safe enough for the surefooted mules of the villagers, but less agreeable for the post-horses of travellers.

The hot day was over, one Thursday in August, and the inhabitants of St. Ouest sat outside their doors on either side the gutter, cooling themselves in the air and the scent before going to bed. The place could boast of a large and good inn, for the road above St. Ouest was one of traffic, and travellers were apt to turn off it to the village when they wanted rest, or to change their post-horses. The Hôtel du Lion d'Or stood at the entrance of the town, its host being the postmaster, as the sign over his large doors intimated: "Auguste Dusommerard, Maître de Poste aux Chevaux." Where Monsieur Auguste hid himself in the day-time nobody could tell; perhaps the cafés could; but the active, bustling conductor of the business was madame his wife. She saw to the housekeeping, she saw to the cooking, she saw to the servants, she saw to the guests, she saw to the marketing, she saw to the post-horses and she saw to everything. What would these lazy, incapable Frenchmen do without their active, clever wives?

Madame Dusommerard, like the rest of St. Ouest, sat on the bench in front of her hotel. She was a slim, active woman, with a clear complexion and quick dark eyes. Three of her maids sat on the same bench, but at its lower end, while the garçon Zan (as they had

corrupted his name Jean) rested himself in the porte cochère, half sitting on the low post which leaned against its corner. Meanwhile the night drew on, and the cafés began to empty themselves. Monsieur Dusommerard might then have been seen sauntering towards home, in his shirt sleeves, and wiping his brow with one of the wristbands, for it was always hot in the cafés, especially the Café du Soleil, which he patronised.

"Madame! madame!" suddenly screamed forth one of the maids on the bench, "we are going to have travellers to-night. I hear the sound."

"Bah!" responded madame. "Who is likely to come so late as this? Your ears are too fine, Célestine."

Célestine had a remarkably quick ear, and sometimes presumed upon it, but she knew she was right now. "They have turned off the road, and are coming down," she said. "Two carriages there must be, for I hear a double set of horses—three or four to each carriage."

Madame bent her ear. "It is so," she exclaimed. "Look alive, my girls. Zan, get out of the porte cochère."

"St. Marie!" was Mr. Zan's reply, as he stolidly kept his place on the post; "what's the matter with them, that they are advancing at such a mad rate?"

Madame rose, and stood in consternation; the frightened women-servants did the same; whilst Zan abandoned his post, ran a few steps to the left, turned up by the side of the house, and gained the vineyard, whence he had a view of the descent and was out of harm's way. Never had they yet heard horses come down that hill at a more fearful pace.

Zan folded his arms and did nothing: an Englishman would have rushed forward, at the risk of danger to himself, in the hope of averting it for the travellers. Not so Zan: he only looked on, and waited for consequences. Two carriages were descending the hill, the postilions of the first, who had lost all command of their horses, were shouting and screaming as only Frenchmen can scream. On, on tore the cattle: safely till they came to the sharp turning near to the Lion d'Or; but then——horses, carriage and men were down, a frightful, frightened mass.

Zan condescended to advance then: mine host was soon with him, and half St. Ouest at mine host's heels. The postilions were drawn out first: one of them, though bruised and battered, shook himself and staggered back to afford what help he could: the other was dead. The horses were next secured from doing further mischief, and then the carriage could be got at. It contained a gentleman and lady. The former, who was getting in years, had his head and face covered with blood, cut by the glass. They brought him out, M. Auguste and another supporting him. He did not seem much injured, but confused and partially stunned.

"For the love of Heaven!" he said, "get a doctor. A doctor. Does anybody understand me? Does anybody speak English?"

"Oui, oui, monsieur," answered the landlady, "I do comprendre—I spak the Angleesh. Zan, vîte! cherchez Monsieur le Médecin. You no be afraid, monsieur; you no too much blessé. Docteur soon ici." Madame had entertained many English travellers in her time, and had picked up her stock of English from them.

"Oh, I am all right," he answered, almost contemptuously. "It is the lady."

They were removing her from the carriage, totally insensible. A lady under thirty, dark in complexion, but very handsome. The ready wit of the landlady suggested a mattress, and one was brought in no time. They laid her on it, and carried her to the hotel.

"Are we to stop here for ever?" screamed a female voice, in native French, from the other carriage, which had been brought to a standstill, and the horses' heads turned against the bank, while the postboys had gone on to the scene of accident. "Just come and open this door, some of you gaping mob: I can't do it from the inside. Do you think we don't want to reach miladi and see what damage is done?"

The door was speedily opened, and, scolding and talking, the damsel descended from it. She was a French lady's maid. Behind her came also a coloured woman, holding in her arms a rosy sleeping child of four years, fair as alabaster, with long flaxen curls.

"Est-elle blessée? est-elle tuée?" demanded Mademoiselle Barbarie, as she approached her master, too much flurried to be ceremonious.

"I don't know what she is," he replied: and, it may be observed, that though he had never brought his tongue to utter half a word in French, he could partially make it out, when spoken by others. "Ask if the doctor will be long, Barbarie; if he lives far off."

The doctor lived in the centre of the village, next door to the chemist's shop, and right over the savoury gutter, which was there at its widest. A long and eager queue (madame so phrased it) had flown to fetch him, and in a few minutes he was in the lady's chamber.

Little intermission had he in his visits there for the next thirty hours; indeed, he scarcely left it. The accident had not seriously injured her, unless—here was the danger—after-consequences should ensue. The whole house, doctor included, addressed the travellers as milor and miladi. They were of the English nation, and rich, and that was quite sufficient.

"Milor," on the Friday was tolerably well, with the exception of the diachylon plaster on his head and face. He saw no reason why he should not have some dinner, so he ordered it, and walked about the sitting-room (which contained his bed in one corner), considerably chafed and restive until it should be ready. He had never felt so

"bored" in his life. Unable to show himself in the street, for he was conscious that with those plasters he looked very like a Guy Fawkes: not choosing to appear even in the "salle," with its everlasting eating-table, never unlaid, and the staring Zan; excluded from his wife's chamber, and confined to this narrow one of his own, with its sanded floor, he thought the day never would pass. He asked for some books: they brought him four, all French, and useless to him: he asked for his sweet little daughter, Blanche, but she had been taken out for a walk: he had recourse to the window, but nothing was to be seen but a closed-up house opposite, and the fag-end of the gutter. "Purgatory" (a word he had just made out in the French books) "could not be worse than this!" ejaculated milor.

It struck four, and Célestine and the landlady came in to lay the cloth for his dinner. He could have embraced them both. At the same moment, a sound arose from the street, as of solemn chanting, and madame and Célestine sped to the window. Milor peeped also from behind the calico curtain.

"What's going on?" he asked.

It was a Roman Catholic funeral, winding along towards the cemetery. A number of persons followed it, chiefly of the poorer class.

"Pauvre Etienne!" cried the landlady, her ready tears falling. "To think that this time yesterday he was as well as we are."

"Why, you never mean to say that whoever is in that coffin was alive last night?" exclaimed the Englishman, catching the sense of her words.

"It is the custom with us to bury them the day after death," explained madame. "This is a hot climate, milor. And indeed, the same day, if they die early in the morning, and we can get the preparations ready."

"Sharp work. I should think some get interred alive. I suppose those little boys, walking nearest, are sons of the dead. What did he die of?"

The landlady uttered an exclamation of astonishment. "But is it possible that milor does not know that it is the funeral of the poor postilion who drove him last night?"

He felt greatly shocked, almost to tremor, and sat down on a chair. He had known the poor fellow was killed, but thus to see his body borne past to the grave brought the horror more palpably home to him.

"It is just as if it was to be Etienne Baux, and none but he!" exclaimed the landlady. "When I ordered post-horses out for that travelling-carriage yesterday morning, I ordered lame Jaco out with them; then I found that lame Jaco was down with the fever, and had never come at all that day to his work. So I called out that Louis the paresseux should go. With that, up comes poor Etienne and said he would go, if I pleased, for that Louis the paresseux wanted to

wait and drive the mail, to see his brother, who was dying in the next town.—That nasty fever, milor, has played real work with us this year, all throughout the department.—So poor Etienne went with the horses, stopped there for the day, and was driving them back in your carriage at night. Ah me!"

"Does he leave many children?" was the grave inquiry.

"A whole troop of them. Five or six—is it not, Célestine? And another on the road, more's the pity!"

The procession had wound itself out of sight, up the hill, and Madame and Célestine whisked out of the room again. It was the former who brought in the soup.

What did milor think? The doctor had been in miladi's room since one o'clock, eating nothing, suppose she asked him down to take a plate of soup?

"Yes, of course," was the ready answer. "Not soup"—with a rueful glance at the watery contents of the tureen—"something better; meat and wine."

The doctor came; and swallowed down the contents of a soup-plate, standing. It was *bonne*, *excellente*, he said, better than meat, which he had no time for, and as to wine—no, no. He had need that day of a steady hand and cool head. All was going on well, he added, but it had been a critical accident for miladi. And ever since she came to her senses she had given way to such excitement; was so anxious that the child should be a boy, that it should be born alive.

"We have no heir," explained the Englishman, through the landlady. "A girl cannot inherit." The surgeon shrugged his shoulders. Living under the equalised codes of France, our laws of heirship were about as easy for him to understand as those of the ancient Medes and Persians.

By the help of some good claret, of which he was compelled to drink sparingly lest his head should inflame, the forlorn guest got through the rest of the day. On the following one he determined to go out, plasters or no plasters. Another day of *ennui*, like the preceding one, would "do him up." All was sufficiently well in his wife's chamber, and when the black nurse dressed little Blanche that morning, she told her she had a new brother. So by dint of pulling his hat low on his brow, and tying a black silk handkerchief up the sides of his face, he partially hid the damages, and sallied out.

His first steps were naturally directed to the scene of the accident, and here, as he strolled slowly up the hill, after contemplating it, he found that the upset had shaken him more than he thought, for he felt fatigued and dizzy, and down he sat on the roadside bank. Closing his eyes, he only opened them at the sound of footsteps.

A traveller was descending the hill, a sunburnt man about his own age, who held a stout stick in one hand and his straw hat in the other, whilst a small valise was swung round his shoulders. He was about to pass the invalid, when the latter rose up in haste.

"Surely," he exclaimed, "it must be Major Hayne! It *is* you, Philip."

"And who the deuce—why, bless my heart and mind, if I don't believe it is Henry Ashley! Is it you, or your spirit?"

"It was pretty near being my spirit, the day before yesterday," was Sir Henry Ashley's reply, as he grasped the traveller's hand. "How singular that we should meet here!"

"Singular! I do not believe it is real. I was dreaming of you last night, and have been thinking of you to-day, half resolving that my next move should be to England, to pay you a visit at Ashley. And here, as I descend this hill, hundreds of miles away from it, and wonder what the old beggar I see on its side has been up to with his face and head, he turns out to be Hal Ashley! What have you been doing to yourself?"

"If I were not a family man, I should make a vow never to travel again but as you do—on foot," replied Sir Henry. "As we were coming down this hill, on Thursday evening, my carriage was overturned — there, a little below; and the final results are still uncertain."

"An awkward bit of road," remarked the Major, scanning it with his keen eye.

"Awkward! I never saw such a nasty hill. I wish I had those whose place it is to alter it under my magisterial thumb at Ashley. It is a disgrace to any civilised land; but they are not civilised in this wretched France. One of the postboys was killed, the other injured, you see the figure I cut, and my wife has been driven into premature illness."

"How long have you been abroad?" inquired Major Hayne, as he sat down on the bank. "I was not aware you had left England."

"Twelve months. We went to Paris first, and since then have been about, I can hardly tell you where. Right royally glad was I to turn towards Old England again. We intended being back there for Lady Ashley's confinement."

"You don't like the Continent?"

"I hate and despise it. I should never have consented to come, but that Lady Ashley's state required change. We lost our eldest child in a most unfortunate manner—the little fellow whose christening we were celebrating the day you came to Ashley, some years ago. It was a lamentable accident, and arose partly through my carelessness. Lady Ashley went nearly out of her mind: indeed, I do think that for a time she was positively insane, and the medical men ordered a complete change of scene. So we came abroad."

"Has it been of service to her?"

"Oh yes; she had grown quite well. And now this appalling accident! And for it to have occurred in this wretched village, which, so far as I can see, has neither comforts nor conveniences! Nothing to be bought for money. I believe they have been obliged to dress

the infant in Blanche's things. And, to make it more inconvenient altogether, I caught my man-servant out, a fortnight ago, in such barefaced pilfering, that I discharged him, and determined not to get another, as we were returning home. These foreign servants are all rogues."

"Who is Blanche?" demanded Major Hayne.

"My little girl. Suppose we go and see her," he added, rising. "The loveliest child, Philip!"

"Got the Ashley curls?"

"Ay. The poor boy was like his mother, but Blanche is an Ashley all over."

Major Hayne gave Sir Harry his arm, and they proceeded to the inn. The landlady met them at the entrance.

Had milor been to register the infant at the *mairie?*

Not he. "Milor" knew nothing about the registering or the *mairie.* What did she mean?

Then he must go to the *mairie* without delay. A child born in France was compelled to be registered at the *mairie* within a few hours of its birth, and Monsieur le Commissaire had just looked in to say it must be adhered to in this instance, although the infant was a foreigner and a heretic: otherwise they should all be brought up before the court to answer for their negligence. Milor must go at once.

"How can I go amongst the people this object?" uttered Sir Harry.

Oh, that was nothing, madame answered. Everybody knew of the accident, and would only sympathise with the patches of plaster. Her husband was waiting to accompany milor, in the capacity of witness, and had his best coat on, in readiness.

So Sir Harry, growling, went with Major Hayne and the landlord to the *mairie.* The officiating Frenchman, whose face could not be seen for hair, sat, pen in hand, ready to inscribe the child. "Quel nom?" he demanded.

"He asks what name," interpreted Major Hayne, who had picked up a sort of language in his travels which did for French. "What is it to be?"

"Name!" uttered the discomfited Sir Harry. "Lady Ashley likes to fix on the children's names herself, and she is too ill to be spoken to. It cannot be necessary to name it now."

"Quite indispensable, he says," cried Major Hayne, after a parley. "Impossible to register it without, he's saying. Just hark how he jabbers at us!"

"What absurdities the laws of France are!" exclaimed Sir Harry wrathfully. "Indispensable, indeed! and the infant but a few hours old! Why don't they insist on naming a child before it is born?"

"The name is not of much consequence," responded the Major. "Give him your own."

"No. Lady Ashley said, one day, she disliked mine."

"Give him mine, then. Philip."

"That's as good as any other, in the uncertainty," mused Sir Harry. "Tell him 'Philip.' Stay—add 'Ryle.' 'Philip Ryle.'"

Another colloquy ensued, puzzling to both sides. Sir Harry flew into a rage at the Frenchman's stupidity in spelling English names, and at length Major Hayne wrote them down in large letters, and the man copied them into the register. "Philip Ryle, fils de Henri Ashley, rentier, et de Lauretta Carnagie."

MISFORTUNES never come alone, so the old saying runs. St. Ouest was liable to be visited, towards the fall of the year, by a low fever, half aguish, half typhoid. Had our commissioners of health gone there, they might probably have assigned its cause to that sanitary gutter, which, with a few more, equally sweet, ended in a pool of stagnant water and malaria. The inhabitants thought nothing of the gutters or the fever: they had been bred up in their midst. Now it is well known that a person going fresh into a locality where a disease reigns is particularly liable to be attacked, and this may have been the case with Sir Harry Ashley. Certain it is, that, before he had been a week at St. Ouest, he was down with the fever.

It was a struggle between life and death. And when the positive danger from the disease was over, there appeared to be quite as much danger from the state of weakness to which he was reduced. It may not have been the reader's fortune to witness, personally, the effects of this fever, common to many a French town. It has been mine: and I can truly say that there is no weakness, no prostration, worse than that entailed by this disorder.

What the baronet would have done without Major Hayne, it is impossible to say. Probably have died. The Major was his constant and patient nurse, his cheering companion. He watched the moment for administering his strengthening medicines and nourishment, he was ever at hand with a cheerful word to rally his drooping spirits. Sir Harry feebly expressed his regret that the Major should be subjected to so wearisome a task, urging him to leave him to his fate, and to seek relief in continuing his travels. Wearisome! the Major replied: he should never care, so far as he himself was concerned, to be jollier than he was now. He had been long without a reminder of old times in India, and this was one: he had brought many a chum, there, through worse illness than this! All sorts of expedients the Major resorted to to amuse the invalid. Blanche was repeatedly called into requisition, for he thought that if anything could arouse Sir Harry from his dreamy state of weakness, it must be the sight of his children. The Major condescended to turn nurse, and would hold the infant, Blanche's new brother, on his knee, and exhibit its swarthy face to Sir Harry. The fact was, Major Hayne began to fear that unless Sir Harry would make an effort of his own accord to rally, they should

be obliged to leave him in the cemetery of St. Ouest. The Major was afraid of touching the baby at first, but he got used to it. It was curiously small, and bore a striking resemblance to its mother in its very dark complexion, piercing black eyes, which already had her keen expression, and promises of jet-black hair. When it grew to be five or six weeks old, the Major would pretend to play at bo-peep with it. Anything to excite a languid look or smile from the invalid.

The medical men—for in addition to the village doctor one had been called in from a distant town—at length pronounced that Sir Harry's best chance of recovery would be change of air. Sir Harry had thought so from the first, for the very place, he declared, was pestilential, and "the smells stifled him." Major Hayne eagerly seized on the notion, and undertook to consult with Lady Ashley.

That lady had not left her chamber, though the child was then two months old, and consequently had not seen her husband during his illness. "An unfeeling shame," muttered the Major to himself; "the woman is as capable of coming down a few stairs and across a corridor as I am; and if not, she might wrap herself up and be carried down. It's all Indian laziness."

The Major was not far wrong. However, he entered Lady Ashley's chamber and told her why it was necessary that they should depart. Would she go?

Lady Ashley quite laughed at him. She might be well enough to think of it by about Christmas, not before.

"In the half of that time, ma'am, in the quarter of that time, we should have to put your husband underground, if he stopped here."

"It is of no use talking, Major; it annoys me. I shall not think of stirring from here until I feel I am sufficiently strong to bear the journey without fatigue."

The Major was sorely tempted to an explosion, but he coughed it down. A bright idea seized him. "As it may be essential to keep your husband alive, as well as yourself, what do you say to our going forward at once?" he asked; "you can follow at your leisure."

"Thank you," resentfully uttered Lady Ashley. "A generous proposition, that, to leave me alone in this horrid place."

"You seem fond of it," retorted the Major. "However, Lady Ashley, as it is a matter of life and death to Sir Harry, and his going or staying cannot seriously affect you, I shall take upon myself to act, and remove him."

The Major was a resolute man. When once he deemed that he ought to do a thing, he did it, in spite of obstacles. Perhaps Lady Ashley found this out, for she afterwards acquiesced, with an ill grace, in the necessity for her husband's departure. It was arranged that Blanche should also leave. Sir Henry was anxious to convey the child beyond reach of that horrible fever; not that it was generally deemed infectious, but a sojourner at St. Ouest was never safe, and he desired to leave as little care behind for his wife as

possible. No sooner decided than done. Major Hayne made a bargain for a second-hand, nondescript sort of carriage, containing two compartments. In the coupé-front of this went Blanche and Mam'selle Barbarie; in the larger intérieur one of the seats was removed and a mattress laid down for the invalid, while the Major sat on the other. And thus they progressed by easy stages, very easy ones indeed, towards Paris.

"Ciel! quel malheur!" uttered Madame Dusommerard, entering Lady Ashley's room one gloomy day in November. "Has miladi heard the news?"

"What news?" apathetically responded miladi.

"That poor widow of Etienne Baux! She has never been strong since the child was born, and now she is gone. I sent Thérésine down with a little bowl of soup, and now she has brought it back and says the woman died an hour ago. The stupid thing, that Thérésine is! but she is a girl who never did have any head. As if she could not have given the broth to the poor children, instead of lugging it back here."

"Whoever will take care of the children?" exclaimed Lady Ashley, somewhat aroused. "There are several, are there not?"

"Who, indeed! It is a merciful thing, miladi, that there's a God to be a Father to the fatherless. Poor little creatures! It is not that they will be quite at a fault for means, for milor's liberality has prevented that, but who is to charge themselves with them and bring them up? Perhaps Mademoiselle Baux, the repasseuse, will; she is their only relation that I know of, and she is their father's sister."

"My lady," interrupted Nana, putting her black head inside the room, "nursee say little piccaninny not seem well—if my lady go see?"

There was no need of a second summons. Lady Ashley darted across the passage to the room occupied by her infant. The wet-nurse had it in her arms, its eyes were heavy and its face flushed.

"If it were older, I should say it was about its teeth," cried madame, who had followed.

"Send instantly for the doctor," interrupted Lady Ashley, putting herself into a state of great excitement. "Let him be brought without an instant's loss of time."

Madame went to give the necessary orders. When she returned, Lady Ashley was pacing the room as if she were walking for a wager, the child clasped in her arms. "But miladi is troubling herself more than there's occasion for," remonstrated the landlady.

"More than there's occasion for," reiterated Lady Ashley. "This child's life is of greater value than ours; better we all died together than he."

"Oh, miladi is pleased to joke," was madame's rejoinder. "A child's life is precious, nobody would say to the contrary, but it

cannot be put in comparison with that of a grown-up person—with miladi's own, let us say. A child is but a child."

"I tell you, upon this child's living depends more than you can form any idea of," retorted Lady Ashley, who was too much agitated to weigh her words. "He must live! he shall not die!"

The doctor was heard coming up the stairs, and madame opened the door in readiness. He looked at the child; he saw nothing particularly the matter with it.

"Is it attacked with the fever?" demanded Lady Ashley.

The fever, bah! The fever had left the town a month ago. He had told miladi so himself.

"Doctor," she impressively whispered in the strongest French she could command, and the words trembled on her lips, "the child *must* live. Keep him well, keep him in life, and I will reward you as you have never yet been rewarded."

The doctor looked at Lady Ashley and turned away with a raise of the shoulders. "If the child should be attacked with illness, I will do for him what lies in my skill," he observed, "but for life—that is not in mortal hands, miladi."

The doctor prescribed some medicine and went home again. He was descanting to his wife, "Les drôles de caractères qu'ils sont, ces Anglais!" when Zan burst into his room, in his untidy slippers down at heel, without the ceremony of knocking. Monsieur le Médecin must fly up to the hotel upon wings. The infant had gone into a convulsion, and miladi its mother was stark frantic.

Little rest that day had the worried doctor between the "frantic" mother and the sick child. It relapsed from one convulsion into another, the last occurring about twelve o'clock at night. In that it died. It happened—it is wonderful to see and reflect how great emergencies are sure to be provided for!—that a Swiss Protestant minister halted for that evening at the hotel. The landlady suggested that he should baptise the infant: indeed, the whole arrondissement had been alive with the scandal of its having been delayed so long—"these careless heretics!"—and Lady Ashley, when convinced there was no hope of its life, consented. So poor little Philip Ryle was made a Christian to die.

Excited, unmanageable as Lady Ashley had been that whole day, with the child's death she relapsed into comparative calmness. But she would not be spoken to. The attendants suggested her retiring to rest: she waved them off, and paced restlessly from one room to another, muttering words between her closed teeth and gesticulating with her hands, as if she were debating some question with herself.

Morning came, and with it commenced the preparations for the child's funeral. It was to take place that evening. Lady Ashley indignantly protested against the haste, and the authorities were requested to allow it to be delayed. They refused: they said there were no grounds for granting the request, and nobody had ever

asked such a thing before. The Protestant minister had offered to remain to bury it; and Monsieur le Curé, the local priest, with magnanimous generosity, allowed it to be laid just outside his cemetery; not inside, lest it might contaminate the ashes of the departed Roman Catholics. Another funeral also took place the same afternoon—that of the widow of the ill-fated Etienne Baux, the post-boy. The whole population of the place turned out to attend them through the rain: a few were attracted by sympathy to that of Madame Etienne, but the masses flocked to the other, curious to witness the ceremonies of the heretics over the burial of their dead.

Late in the evening, Madame Dusommerard was in her kitchen, scolding her maids, for the seven o'clock supper was not ready. It had been a noted day, what with the funeral from the house and the other one, and the girls had seized upon the opportunity for enjoying a gossip; consequently their work suffered, and madame was holding forth in rather shrill tones. She was in the midst of a sentence, specially hurled at Mam'selle Thérésine, when, upon turning her head, who should she see, standing in the middle of the kitchen, but Lady Ashley, dressed to go out.

Madame's tongue and words dropped to the softness of butter in summer. What could she have the pleasure of doing for miladi? To think that miladi should have condescended to come down there, amongst the casseroles!

"I want a guide," said Lady Ashley—"some one to go out with me. I wish to go and see those poor orphan children. Let one of the servants show me the way," she added.

"But miladi surely will never do such a thing to-night!" cried madame. "Everybody must appreciate miladi's benevolent thoughts, but she must consider her own comfort and health. It is pitch dark, and the rain pouring down still, as it has done all day. Miladi had better wait till morning."

Miladi chose to go then. So Célestine, in obedience to orders, threw on her ample olive-green cloth cloak and attended her.

"Is it far?" inquired Lady Ashley, walking under the large, bright scarlet umbrella, which Célestine held.

"About six or seven minutes' walk," responded the girl. "We follow the gutter—would miladi please to take care of her long petticoats?—then turn to the right, then to the left, and miladi is at it."

They reached the place, Célestine piloting Lady Ashley up the stairs. The sister of Etienne Baux had entered, and taken possession of the room, the furniture and the children. Four children were asleep in the bed in the recess, two at the top of the bed, two at the foot, French fashion; another slept in the bed in the room, and the infant, now a month old, Marie Baux held in her arms, feeding it with some broth from her own supper. Two gossips were seated near, having dropped in to bear her company.

"It is Miladi Anglaise," was Célestine's introduction to the astonished Demoiselle Baux. "She is come to see the poor little orphans, all through the dark and wet. Madame wanted her to put it off till daylight, but nothing would do but that she must come to-night. Quelle dame charitable! and her own infant only three hours buried!"

Lady Ashley cast a glance, and but a glance, towards the sleeping children, whilst the gossips said "Bon soir," and withdrew in all humility. Her ladyship's attention was riveted on the infant. "Is it healthy?" she inquired. "Is it likely to live? It seems a very large child."

"Alas, yes! poor unfortunate!" replied Mademoiselle Baux. "It would had been a mercy, miladi, had it pleased the Holy Virgin to remove it with its mother, but strong as it is, it's sure to live and grow. It is the strongest and heartiest of all the lot. But just reflect, miladi, what a task it is to fall on my hands!—I, who was beginning to think of getting married myself. I should not have cared so much for the others, although there are five of them; they can shift for themselves, and two or three will soon be able to do something; but it is this infant that's the tie. How I am to go out to my work, the saints only know; and I have my regular places. I can't leave it in bed, to be pitched out by the others; and I can't leave it on the floor, to be trampled on; and I can't dance myself home, three or four times a day, to feed it. Ah! it's a dreadful charge to fall on me, is this child!"

"I feel much compassion for the case," rejoined Lady Ashley, "and have come to see how I can help you. Suppose I were to take this infant and bring him up?"

The Demoiselle Baux could not understand. Miladi's French was somewhat obscure; but had such an offer been made in the most concise language, she would have thought she heard wrongly.

"I have no boy," repeated Lady Ashley: "my own dear little one is just buried in your cemetery. I will take this one, if you will, to supply its place."

Heavens! but Miladi Anglaise could never be serious! Such an offer to descend upon the poor miserable orphan Baux! Mademoiselle was bewildered with its greatness.

"Then you will give him to me?" said Lady Ashley.

"Oh, miladi! can it indeed be real? Mademoiselle Célestine, can it be that Miladi Anglaise is not playing the farce with me?" reiterated Marie Baux, in tears. "Miladi shall be prayed for every day for a year. Night and morning I'll go into the church, my own self, to supplicate the Virgin for her in a prayer. Such goodness is unbelievable."

"Then I *am* to have him?" repeated Lady Ashley, growing impatient.

"Oh, whenever miladi pleases. And we will all fall on our knees

in thanksgiving. It is nothing short of a miracle that has fallen on the infant."

The amazed Célestine crossed herself. She had stood, till now, with her mouth open. "Quelle bonté!" she murmured, "l'ange de charité qu'elle est!"

"I will take him now," said Lady Ashley.

"Now! late at night! in the merciless rain!" repeated Marie Baux.

"He will come to no harm. Célestine shall put him under her cloak. Neither cold nor rain can touch him there."

The infant, during the discussion, had fallen asleep. Mademoiselle Baux wrapped a shawl round him and handed him to Célestine. She stooped to kiss his cheek before the girl hid him in the ample folds of her olive cloak. "Miladi will be kind to him?" she whispered, looking with a supplicating expression at Lady Ashley.

"Kind to him!" repeated Lady Ashley. "The child shall be brought up as my own child. I promise it to you in the hearing of Heaven. What more would you have?"

"Oh, miladi is all goodness! we should be infidels to doubt her," answered the Demoiselle Baux. "And for the poor bits of caps and things he has, I will bring them to miladi at the hotel——"

"No!" imperiously interrupted Lady Ashley. "Give them to any child who has need of them: and you can come to-morrow morning and fetch away these he has on."

Lady Ashley and Célestine, the former condescending to carry the ponderous scarlet umbrella, had left the house and plunged into the mud outside it, when Mademoiselle Baux came after them in a flurry.

Miladi had forgotten to ask the child's name. It was Robert.

Considerably astonished was the Hotel, and all in it, when the new importation arrived. The praises of Miladi Anglaise were sounded from one end of it to the other. Such an instance of benevolence had never before been heard of. The nurse spoke up loudest of any, and seized the little child with signs of rapture. She spoke feelingly: ever since the other infant's death she had been crying her eyes out at the prospect of losing so good a place, and now she should retain it.

But another surprise was to fall upon the hotel: perhaps not so agreeable a one. Lady Ashley, that same night, summoned the landlady, and gave orders for their departure the following day. The place was now too melancholy for her to remain in, she said; madame might readily believe that—and her husband, Sir Henry, spoke anxiously in his letters for her return. He was already at their own home, Ashley.

Madame replied that she knew well St. Ouest must be *triste*, and though sorry to lose miladi, she could not of course urge her remaining. But she hoped they might see miladi again some time: perhaps next summer.

Lady Ashley could not say. It was very far from England. Madame might present the bill in the morning, and see to the post-horses. She should start in the middle of the day.

Nana, the West Indian servant, stood waiting to undress her lady that night, and it seemed she was to wait in vain. Certainly, Lady Ashley could bear an incredible deal of fatigue. The whole of the previous night she had paced the rooms in excitement, and this one, when it might be thought she would have been glad of rest and sleep, she was pacing them still. Nana was tired, if her mistress was not: it was close upon midnight: and as the monotonous footsteps of Lady Ashley sounded on her ear from the adjacent rooms sleep stole over her.

How long she slept she did not know, but her arm was suddenly and rudely shaken. She started up to see her mistress bending over her.

"Nana!" uttered Lady Ashley, with that resolute look on her dark face, and those pale compressed lips which the good, faithful woman disliked to see—"Nana, do you want to be flogged?"

"Ha! mercy, my lady! Nana only shut her eyes for she think one little minute, and sleep come, come, without her knowing it."

"Tush! sleep away if you like, when you are not wanted; what do I care? It is many years since you were flogged——"

"Oh, many, many," interrupted the woman, beginning to tremble. "My lady, what poor Nana do?"

"Will you hear me, woman? I speak not of those old, light floggings in the West Indies and in Madras, but I ask if you would like to be flogged till you drop—till you die?"

What with the sudden waking, and the words, the woman trembled so violently that her teeth began to chatter; but, from the force of habit, she gave a straightforward answer.

"No; it would be dreadful so to be punished now. Why does my lady threaten it?"

"I threaten it only in case of your disobedience. You have seen that child I brought here to-night: it is to be mine. Do you understand? When we get home to England, it is to be the little child I lost. None know that he is dead: I have not written: they never will know it. And if ever you breathe a word of the truth—a word that this is not the child Sir Henry left here—you shall be scourged as I tell you."

The dark West Indian blood rushed into Lady Ashley's excited face, and her clenched hands shook as she held them threateningly at Nana. The latter spoke:

"My lady knows that Nana always obey her, always, always. Nana her own slave and her mother's slave before her. If my lady say Nana jump into that fire, Nana do it. My lady only tell Nana what to say, and Nana say it."

"It is well," returned Lady Ashley. "Remember."

"But nursee not a slave," suddenly exclaimed the woman, as an idea appeared to strike her: "how my lady make nursee say it was the same child?"

"That is my business," retorted Lady Ashley. "Yours is to mind what I have commanded you."

It was one o'clock the next day, about fourteen weeks from the period of her arrival at St. Ouest, that Lady Ashley quitted the hotel. Her black maid, the infant Robert Baux, and the nurse, who was a native of St. Ouest, accompanying her. She had been a profitable guest, one the hotel did not often meet with, and Monsieur Auguste Dusommerard, madame his wife, the three maids and Zan, all stood in the street to salute her, on the right and left of the porte cochère. Half the town had likewise congregated there to watch the departure, the Demoiselle Baux and the orphan children forming part of them, while murmurings of prayer for Miladi Anglaise the angel caught the ear. Lady Ashley gave a cold bow on either side, and the carriage moved up the hill. As it toiled past the cemetery the lady cast a passionate, regretful glance towards a spot of earth near it, and when it was no longer visible she flung herself back in her seat, and her eyes fell upon the infant opposite to her. If we may believe all tales, that little child is not the only one who has been palmed off for a real heir.

(To be continued.)

"HE COMETH NOT," SHE SAID.

JOHN is not come home !
The kine lie midst the sedges on the shore,
Or moan and wander to the dairy door,
Or restless o'er the dewy moorlands roam.
Not come home !
Such simple words, to mean so much to me,
To keep me weeping, watching by the sea—
The cruel sea, whose waves for ever foam.
So long ago, ah, me !
The length'ning shadows fell upon the beck
And on the moorlands to the rocky neck
Of Ulla, lying broken in the sea.
So long ago, that morn !
The sunrise made our home a golden home,
The foam upon the sea-waves golden foam,
The thorn tree on the hill a golden thorn.
So long ago, those hours !
" Methinks," said John, " the world a golden world,
And yon a golden ship with flags unfurl'd ;
The flow'rs upon the moorlands golden flowers."
So long ago, my love !
He took a leaf, and laid it in his breast,
" Oh, golden leaf ! " said he, and pointed to the West.
Thence upward to the golden light above.
So long ago, the shock !
The sun had set, and o'er the shadowed lea,
The wind with fury drove the foaming sea,
And wrecked the vessels on the sunken rock.
John is not come home !
Yet often in the sunrise' golden shrine,
Upon the purple moorlands lie the kine,
Or towards the golden sea impatient roam.
Not come home ? you jest !
Oh, sea ! Give up thy dead ! Deep calls to deep ;
Awake from slumber those who lie asleep !
Whose smiling lips thy song has lulled to rest.
All shall sleep !
The tired and heavy-laden ones shall lie
At rest ; and peace shall close the weary eye
In sleep ; and spread her wings upon the deep.
Oh, John, I grow so old !
And shadows linger long upon the beck,
And heavy gloom lies brooding o'er the wreck,
And, phantom like, creeps farther o'er the wold.

John is not come home !
Then lay me gently on the shadow'd lea,
That as I die mine eyes may watch the sea—
The wind-tossed sea, whose spray breaks into foam.
HE doeth all things well !
Have patience, tender heart ! The scourging's past,
The suff'rings cease, and joy will come at last.
Oh, life and death, whose mysteries no tongue can tell !

ADA M. TROTTER.

DÎS ALITER VISUM.

July 30, 1700—January 14, 1892.

TILL the lamented death of the late Duke of Clarence and Avondale, English history has furnished, at least since the Conquest, but one instance of the decease of the heir apparent *of* the heir apparent to the Crown.

That instance was supplied by the death, July 30, 1700, of the Duke of Gloucester, the only surviving child of Princess, afterwards Queen, Anne.

It may also be mentioned as a remarkable incident that King William the Third, who then filled the throne, was the only example of an English sovereign who would not necessarily have been succeeded by his own posterity. For by Act of Parliament, Princess Anne was next in the succession and after her her children.

There was every human probability that the young Duke of Gloucester, who was but eleven at the time of his death, would survive both William and Anne and rule the British Empire as King William the Fourth. But it was ordered otherwise. The life of this poor young duke was of immense political importance, for, as the adherents of the exiled monarch at St. Germains fully believed, his life was the chief, if not the only real, obstacle that existed to prevent the restoration of the Prince of Wales. Therefore every one who hated Popery and loved the Protestant religion and liberty earnestly prayed for the long life of the Duke of Gloucester. But their prayers were not answered.

How greatly changed are times !

When nearly two centuries ago the young royal Duke lay dying at Windsor, there were thousands of English men and English women of all ranks and degrees eagerly hoping that the next tidings would be of his decease.

What a contrast to yesterday when there was probably throughout the globe not one British heart that did not throb with sympathy for the royal household at Sandringham, and rise in prayer to the Almighty that He would avert the impending blow.

Another contrast that is worthy to be noted :

The Prince, whose loss the nation now so justly deplores, had in his short but fatal illness the best medical treatment that advanced science could give. It was far otherwise with the hapless Duke of Gloucester, who appears to have been simply sacrificed to the ignorance of his physicians. The boy's malady was scarlet fever, but he was treated first for quinsy and then for small pox. To this treatment he succumbed in three days.

His tutor, the celebrated Gilbert Burnet, Bishop of Salisbury, was present throughout the Duke's illness, and by the command of the

Princess Anne, wrote an account of its brief and terrible progress to the Archhishop of Canterbury, Dr. Tenison at that time, as first of the Lords Justices representing the King, then absent in Holland.

As we read the bishop's letter, the sad and melancholy scene rises before us as an actuality. They are taken from the originals, and both the grammar and the spelling are exactly reproduced. It may be premised that the Duke of Gloucester was born July 24, 1689.

"Windsor Castle, 27 July, 1700, 2 o'c.

"May it please your Grace,—

"This is by the Princesses orders to prevent all stories or misrepresentations. The Duke was a little ill the day after his birthday, which we imputed to the fatigue of that day. It went off, and he was pretty well, till last night that he was feaverish, his head ached, and he had a sore throat; so the Princesse sent for Dr. Hans, who fearing a Quinzy, has let him blood three hours agoe five or six ounces. Since that time his feaver is abated, no ill simptome of no sort appears, but the Doctor desires assistance, in case of accidents. Upon this Dr. Gibbons is sent for, only out of the caution that an affair of this consequence requires. This is the true state of this matter, which I am commanded to signify to your Grace that you may communicate it to any of their Excellencies.

"I am, &c.,
"Gi. Sarum."

When Dr. Hans stuck his lancet into the poor boy, he let out his very life blood; and when presently afterwards Dr. Gibbons and his brethren made their appearance, and applied blisters to the royal patient, his doom was assured. Bishop Burnet thus reported the result.

"Windsor Castle, 29 July, 1700,
"10 in the morning.

"May it please your Grace,—

"The Doctors have been now with the Duke; they opened one of the blisters which rise very well. They are still of a mind in their presciptions, but Dr. Ratcliffe is not yet satisfied whether it may not prove to be the small pox, at night he believes it will be plainer. They do all agree it is a malignant feaver, and that there is much danger in it. This is what I am ordered to lay before your Grace. God of his mercy hear our praiers, and give me cause by my next to send you a more comfortable account.

"I am &c.,
"Gi. Sarum."

The end was now not far off, though the doctors did not think so. Nine hours after his last letter, the bishop wrote another.

"Windsor Castle, 29 July, 1700,
"near seaven at night.

"May it please your Grace,—

"Things are no worse, but rather better. The Duke's head is more consistent, his breathing freer, and he sleeps a little more. Dr. Ratcliffe begins now to give over the apprehensions he had of the small pox. The Doctors do still agree in their Prescriptions. Upon opening the blisters for which I have staied the sending this—I had begun this period thinking as was intended that the blisters were to have been opened before this time, but his Highness is in a breathing sweat and sleeps so this is delaied. It is plainly a rash and there is no ill Simptome only as the Feaver is Malignant so the Patient is weak. This is what the Phisitians say who seem to own more hopes now than they did in the morning.

"I am, with all Respect, My Lord, Your Grace's most humble and most obedient Servant, "GI. SARUM."

As may be supposed the end was not far distant, and a few hours terminated the boy's sufferings. The sad event was thus announced.

"Windsor Castle, 30th July, 1700,
"2 in the morning.

"My Lord,—

"God has now thought fit to put an end to this Prince's daies, and to all our hopes from him. At nine last night the Doctors applied two new blistering plaisters; the blisters of the former were fair and full, and everything seemed very promising, but before eleven there was a terrible change. The inflammation in his throat grew to that degree that it choked him. The Doctors ordered him to be cupped, and some ounces of blood were taken from him, but with no success, for he panted on till one o'clock this morning, and then, just as we ended the commendatory praier, he died. I can say nothing, and indeed think nothing, after this dismall sight. God be mercifull to a sinfull nation. I need not tell your Grace how much the Prince and Princesse are sunk with this. God of His mercy support them and Preserve the King. "I am, &c.,
"GI. SARUM."

It was the opinion of many that the death of the Duke of Gloucester was almost a direct Providential interposition. Young as he was, he had already manifested an extraordinarily military turn of mind. His toys, his amusements, his thoughts, all took this singular bias. He formed a troop of his young friends, placed himself at their head, and was never tired of exercising his boyish manœuvres with them. This tendency in after life might possibly have plunged the country into all the evils of constant warfare.

The same tendency was observable in the case of Prince Henry, the heir apparent of James I., who died at the age of 20. But in him it was allied to great intellectual attainments, and, in so young a man, singular wisdom and good judgment. Here again we have a contrast with the lamented Duke of Clarence, whose proclivities seem all to have been of an essentially peaceful and amiable nature, endearing him most to those who knew him best.

The Duke of Gloucester was sacrificed to the ignorance of his physicians, but the death of the Duke of Clarence can be ascribed to no such cause. Here we have to remain silent and submissive before the WISDOM that ordereth all things well, assured that even the chastening Hand of the Almighty must be fraught with blessing. We shall not always see through a glass darkly, and all that seems incomprehensible to us now we "shall know hereafter."

JANUARY 14, 1892.

WHAT can we say when cold Death steps between
And severs two young lives in freshest bloom,
One passing to the silence of the tomb,
The other mourning all that might have been?
What can we say when grief is yet so keen?
When orange blossoms change to cypress drear
And bridal flowers, all tear-dewed, deck the bier
O'er which she weeps—the chosen future Queen?
In grief like hers the tenderest words are vain.
We can but look behind the clouds of Fate
Where, shrouded now, still lies Hope's golden gate,
Trusting the years to bring her calm again.
But while slow Time is winnowing peace from pain,
Enthroned within our hearts she still shall reign.

SYDNEY HODGES.

A GUILTY SILENCE.

CHAPTER XI.

CHARLOTTE'S FIRST DISCOVERY.

CHARLOTTE HERNE was sitting alone in her own room, plying her crochet-needle busily. Although the Venetian blinds were so arranged that no ray of sunshine could penetrate into the room, Charlotte's sensitive orbs were further protected from the light by a narrow green shade, in shape not unlike the peak of a Zouave's cap, tied round her head with ribbon of the same colour. The day was hot and sunny, and through the half-open window one might smell the mignonette that grew in a box outside. Charlotte looked as cool, as neat, and as dainty as she always did, whether the day were hot or cold. Not a fold of her grey alpaca dress was out of place; not a single straggling hair could be seen among the elaborately-plaited coils at the back of her head; and her little white hands — and they were very little, even for a person of her diminutive stature—with their pinky palms and filbert nails, seemed as if they could not possibly belong to one who had been brought up amidst the drudgery of a farmhouse.

Presently, there was the sound of someone rapping with their knuckles outside the door. "Come in," said Charlotte; and the head of Sarah, the housemaid, appeared at the door.

"If you please, miss," said Sarah, "Mrs. Popplemead sends her compliments, and she would be happy to see you to tea this afternoon, if you can make it convenient to go. There will only be herself and her two nieces."

"I sha'n't go!" said Charlotte sharply and decisively. Then, finding that the girl did not stir, she rose suddenly from her seat, and stamping her foot, cried in a voice that was shrill with passion: "You have had your answer; why don't you leave the room? I tell you I shall not go! That's enough. Begone, and shut the door after you! I know them," continued Charlotte to herself, as she resumed her seat. "I have not forgotten their insolent patronage of poor blind me the last time I was at their house. They think that because they wear silk gowns, and strum on the piano, and jabber a little French and Italian, that they have a right to look down on every one who cannot do the same. Idiots! If I had not more brains than all three of them put together, I would drown myself to-morrow. Oh! to be pitied and patronised by such people because I am blind and helpless, and dare not defend myself with my tongue! If I were

to tell them what I think of them, Hugh would be sure to hear of it, and then he would be offended. They think that because I am blind, I must be stupid; they think I cannot see through the game they are playing. But Hugh will never marry either of the Miss Popplemeads, try as they may to charm him. Namby-pamby dolls! they were not born to mate with men like cousin Hugh."

Drawing from the bosom of her dress the little locket which Hugh had given her on her birthday, she kissed it twice passionately, and then went on composedly with her work. But a few minutes had passed, when the clock on the mantelpiece of Charlotte's room chimed the half-hour after two, and, following close upon it, came a second knock at the door. "It is you, little cat, is it?" said Charlotte, as the door opened, and a girl of fourteen came into the room. "Again you are half an hour past your time."

"If you please, miss," said the girl, "my grandmother was so ill to-day that I couldn't come any earlier. I hope you'll kindly excuse me, miss."

"I don't care if you have fourteen hundred grandmothers ill," cried Charlotte, with one of her sudden, passionate bursts. "I'll have you here at the proper time, or else you shall suffer for it. Come here, little wretch!" The girl approached her timidly. "Take that! and that!" cried Charlotte viciously; and as she spoke, she pinched the girl sharply with thumb and finger in the fleshy part of both her arms.

The girl could not help giving utterance to a short, quick cry of pain, but took her revenge next moment, while rubbing the pinched parts with a wet finger-tip, by pulling a horrible face at Charlotte, and by muttering something under her breath, which even the blind girl's quick ears failed to catch.

"Crocodile!" hissed Charlotte. "Next time you fail to come at your proper time, I'll run a needle through your lip, and keep it there the whole afternoon. Remember! Now get down Prescott's 'Conquest of Peru,' and go on reading from the point where you left off last."

Tib, with the volume in her hand, seated herself on a low stool close by Charlotte, but yet sufficiently removed from her to be out of reach of any sudden cuff or pinch which the blind girl might feel disposed to inflict. Charlotte having signified that she was ready, Tib began to read in a loud, firm voice, and with very fair emphasis and delivery, the strange story of the Peruvian Conquest, as told by the American historian. Charlotte was a silent and attentive listener. She had put her crochet-work away; but as those restless fingers of hers must always be doing something, they were now toying negligently with a rosary of amber beads, which was one of the possessions that had come to her on her mother's death.

The girl Tib had been engaged by Hugh Randolph purposely to come and read to Charlotte, who had begun to grow fond of books

from the day that her misfortune shut her out from so many other of the world's pleasures. Charlotte cared but little for novels, and, with one exception, even less for poetry—that exception being a translation of the "Iliad,' which Hugh had brought home one day, and in which she took intense delight, making Tib read many parts of it over and over again, till both of them could repeat whole passages of it by heart. Charlotte's favourite literature was history and biography, and nearly all her heroes were great soldiers. Especially did she love to have read to her the story of some great war, or some gigantic conquest; and the blind girl's sympathies were always given to the conquerors; the weak, the vanquished, the sufferers in any cause, whether just or unjust, met with scant pity from Charlotte Herne.

At the back of Dr. Randolph's house stretched a large, old-fashioned wilderness of a garden, which—with the exception of some half-dozen flower-beds, shut in by a thick screen of evergreens, on to which piece of trim seclusion the back windows of the drawing-room opened—met with scant cultivation at the hands of man. Such as it was, Charlotte loved to haunt its weed-grown alleys, and to sit in its tumble-down arbour, and listen to the droning of the bees among the honeysuckles and roses, and the merry twitter of birds in the neighbouring thickets.

Near the lower end of the garden stood two large oaks of antique growth. Pendant from two sturdy branches of these trees was a swing, which Hugh had caused to be fixed there for the behoof of Charlotte, and there, secure from all intrusive eyes, the blind girl would amuse herself for an hour or two every day, except when the weather was too bad to admit of out-door exercise. In shape this swing was something like a small hammock, being just large enough for diminutive Charlotte to coil herself up in, and was made of many-coloured Indian matting. The motive-power was supplied by Tib, who, by means of a supplementary cord fastened to the bottom of the swing, could regulate her mistress's flight through the air at will.

It was an amusement of which Charlotte was especially fond. "It's far nicer than being shut up within four walls," she would sometimes say to Tib. "Tie this gay shawl round my head and let me fancy myself the bride of some bold rover of the Spanish Main, awaiting my lord's return to his island home. You, Tib, are one of my slaves, and if you do not fulfil my behests, however capricious they may seem, I shall have your head chopped off and your body thrown to the sharks in the bay. A little higher, next time; so. That was glorious!" and Charlotte's pale cheeks would flush and her lips curve into one of those rare infantile smiles which lent at times such *naïve* sweetness to her face. Or, if she were in one of her darker moods and disinclined for talking, she would swing to and fro between the trees to the measured cadence of some quaint old rhyme chanted sleepily by Tib—some song of "true, true love and a broken heart," that seemed to lack both beginning and end.

"No more this afternoon, Tib," said Charlotte at last; and Tib brightened up as she stopped the swing and assisted Charlotte to alight.

"You may go home now," said Charlotte a few minutes later; "but see that you are here to a minute to-morrow, or it will be worse for you."

"Yes, Miss Charlotte."

"Let me see, did I pinch you to-day, or not?"

"Yes, miss; on both arms."

"Vile little monkey! if I had pinched you a hundred times, you would have deserved it all. But there's an extra sixpence for you. And now, begone."

Charlotte always paid Tib in sixpences for her pinches and slaps, and Tib, on her side, was quite satisfied with such a mode of settlement.

When Charlotte went downstairs to dinner, she found that Dr. Randolph had been sent for by a country patient, and was not expected home till a late hour, so she dined in a somewhat disconsolate mood alone; and as soon as the meal was over, she put on her hat and wandered out again into the garden. By this time it was growing dusk. Already the sun was lost to view behind the distant range of the Charnock Hills; the larger stars were coming out one by one, and soon the moon would begin to climb the eastern sky. Charlotte threaded her way deftly through the tortuous garden paths till she reached her favourite walk, a long, straight alley, shut in on both sides by thick walls of evergreens, and having a covered seat at one end.

Charlotte often walked here on fine evenings, for the twilight hour was grateful to her eyes; and not infrequently she would continue to pace the lonely alley till long after dark, meditating, castle-building, and talking to herself, till Hugh, cigar in mouth, would come out in search of her, and break up her reverie with a jest.

Hither came Charlotte this evening, for one of her restless moods was creeping over her, and at such times there was no peace for her within doors. Backwards and forwards, from end to end of the dim alley, the blind girl paced with measured, unhurrying footsteps, fingering her amber rosary and muttering strangely to herself.

"One, two, three. One, two, three. Seven's the mystic number, and the letters are always the same, read them which way you will. I must think about it. If I prick a cross in my pillow with seven pins, and gather seven sprigs of rue from seven different spots, and bury them in a hole with the knave of clubs, then, on the seventh night I shall have a dream, in which everything will be made clear. That was a strange dream I had last night! The same old witch-woman, with the toothless gums and the tangled, snake-like hair, that I have seen in my sleep before. But the box which held her ointment! all flashing with diamonds and rubies, and with an awful

Hebrew word engraved on the golden lid. And when I asked her the meaning of the word, she shuddered, and jabbered at me in an unknown tongue, and pointed with her skinny finger to a moon that was in eclipse—for I was not blind in my dream. And then she opened the box, and the smell of the ointment nearly took away my senses, it was so delicious, and yet so strong. And the witch-woman told me that if I would let her rub my eyes with the ointment, and would say a prayer backward after her, the gift of inner sight should be mine, and all Nature's mysteries and the hidden life of the world be made plain to me. So I let her rub my eyes with the ointment, and began to repeat the words after her, and had nearly got through the prayer when there came a flash of lightning that seemed to split the sky in twain; and the witch-woman vanished with a shriek; and as I fell sightless to the earth I heard an awful voice say, 'Thou shalt be blind for evermore.' Ah, what happiness it was to awake and find it nothing but a dream!"

Charlotte sighed and continued her walk in pensive silence for a little while. Then she spoke again.

"Blind for ever and ever! To be a sightless ghost, wandering through all eternity in search of the Heavenly Gate, yet never able to find it! What a terrible fate were that! But why torment myself with this shadow of a dream? I will think of it no more. Is not my lot hard enough already, that I must needs fret myself with the idle fancies of a disordered brain? To know that never again in this world shall I see the sky, the stars, the flowers, or the face of him I love better than all! That surely is a cross heavy enough for these shoulders to bear!"

She stopped in her walk and took off her hat and the shade that covered her eyes, and turned a passionate appealing face up to the evening sky, where daylight still lingered in tints of purple and saffron, and scroll-work of molten cloud. Her hands were clasped tightly, her bosom heaved, her lips moved, inarticulately at first, and then she spoke aloud.

"Oh, mother, mother!" she wailed. "My burden of darkness is greater than I can bear. Intercede for me with the All-Merciful. Ask Him to send His angel of death to your unhappy child. Let His fingers unseal mine eyes; let me put off this earthly husk, and ——"

She ceased speaking. The colour fled her lips, the natural pallor of her face became intensified, her nostrils sharpened like those of a person at the point of death, and all the pulses of her being seemed to stand still in dread expectancy. A minute she stood thus, immovable, like a statue of death in life; her eyes wide open, beautiful, straining upwards as though they held the power of reading the starry mysteries above. When she spoke, it was in a whisper that was a mixture of joy and terror. "Great heaven! can it be true that my sight is coming back to me?" she said. "A veil seems to have been drawn from before my eyes. My blindness is not the blindness

it was before. I can *see* nothing as yet; I only know that this blessed summer twilight is lighter and brighter, and dawns upon my darkness like the breaking of a new day. It is—it must be true!"

And poor Charlotte sank upon her knees, and burst into a wild passion of sobs and tears.

When her overcharged heart had in some measure relieved itself, she got up and hurried into the house, and then upstairs into the seclusion of her own room.

"Perhaps I am only deceiving myself," she kept whispering under her breath. "I must try, and try again before I can be sure."

She had brought a candle and some matches upstairs with her, and she now proceeded to light the former, having first replaced the shade over her eyes. She next put the candle in the middle of the table, and sat down opposite to it; and then, little by little, she removed her shade, so as not to let the full glare of the candle fall too suddenly on her delicate orbs, till, at length, she took it away entirely. Midway between her eyes and the candle she now interposed one of her hands, and fixing her darkened gaze intently on what to her was nothing but a dull, opaque object, without shape or outline, she proceeded to move it slowly backward and forward between herself and the light. This was an experiment which she had often tried before, and she was apparently satisfied with the result of it to-night.

After a few moments of the most anxious silence, she gave a great sigh of relief, and rose from her chair.

"I was not deceived!" she exclaimed. "My sight *is* coming back to me! Now I want to live."

She had already made up her mind that, for the present at least, she would not speak of her precious discovery to anyone. She would keep her own counsel for a little while. Some day, perhaps, she might be able to astonish Hugh by reading something to him aloud, or by pointing out someone in the street. And what a surprise that would be to him! And perhaps—who could tell?—when he found that she was no longer a helpless blind girl—a creature to be pitied with a sort of caressing pity that from any other person would have been intolerable, he might learn to look upon her in a different light—might even learn to love her! Such deep, unchanging love as Charlotte felt for him must, surely, have in it some magnetic force, some occult power of attracting towards itself the object of its intense devotion. "Only give me back my eyes, only make me like other people, and I will teach him to love me in a way that he cannot resist!" This was the happy thought in Charlotte's mind as she dropped off to sleep.

She awoke just as the little clock on her mantelpiece chimed the half-hour past midnight. Even while she slept, the sense of some great happiness had been upon her; and when she awoke and recalled to mind the scene in the garden, and recognized her happiness

as a blessed reality—for she would not suffer any doubt to cloud her mind—she felt far too excited and joyous to sleep again. Getting out of bed, she drew a red woollen shawl over her white night-dress, and tied the ends hehind ; and then taking off her net and allowing her hair to stream unconfined down her shoulders, and without any covering on her feet, she left the room.

Charlotte's rooms, as already stated, were on the top storey of the house ; but above them was a large loft, used as a lumber-store, open to the rafters, and lighted by a couple of skylights, which wilderness Charlotte considered as also a portion of her domain.

Among other articles in the loft was a case containing a skeleton hung on wires, which had been placed there by Hugh, he having no room for it downstairs. Restless Charlotte, prying about one day, discovered this case, which Hugh had not failed to lock before leaving it. From that moment, till she had succeeded in picking the lock with a bit of bent wire, and ascertaining what was inside, Charlotte knew no peace of mind. The contents pleased her hugely. When she first discovered the skeleton, she sat down on the floor of the loft, and laughed aloud till she nearly brought on a fit of hysterics. The door of the case was now kept permanently open, while the skeleton, decorated with one of Charlotte's best nightcaps, and placed close to the door of the loft, stood like a grisly sentinel taking derisive note of all who entered.

Up the narrow staircase leading to this loft went Charlotte, with bare feet and streaming ashen-grey hair, with white night-dress and red waist-tied shawl. She never failed to greet the bony sentinel as she passed him. "Good evening, Captain Skull," she said with an elaborate curtsey. "Always at your post, like a good man and true. You must feel pleasantly cool, this very hot weather."

Through one of the two skylights in the roof of the loft, the moon shone brightly in, and spread a carpet of silver light across the middle of the floor, but left all the corners in deep shadow. Into the middle of this bright track Charlotte dragged a rickety chair from among the lumber piled up at one end of the loft, and sat down on it ; for Charlotte loved to bask in moonlight, and her eyes were sensitive enough to tell her when she was in it, and when in shadow.

"Where are my wee, brown-coated friends to-night ?" said Charlotte as she sat down. "Let me see whether they will obey my summons," and drawing her lips tightly over her teeth, and bringing the latter nearly together, she gave utterance to a low, peculiar, plaintive "week—week—week," like the cry of some small animal in distress, repeating the same several times at short intervals.

Soon, from out the dusky corners and dark hiding-places of the room, there came trooping into the moonlight quite a little army of mice. Timidly at first they came, with an advance guard of three or four that were bolder or hungrier than the rest, sniffing and prying about, and evidently suspecting the presence of some unseen enemy ;

but growing more fearless as Charlotte's peculiar cry was still kept up, as though there was something in it which fascinated them against their will, or else had the power of making them oblivious of danger, and coming at last to cluster quite thickly round Charlotte's chair, fluttering and skimming about, moving blotches of blackness in the gracious moonlight.

Charlotte had not come unprepared for the part she had to play. From a bag which she had brought with her, she drew forth a handful of savoury scraps—grain, bread-crumbs, morsels of cheese, what not, all commingled, and rained them in a beneficent shower around. The startled mice disappeared in an instant at the movement of her hand, only to come skurrying back next minute, a mad, hungry troop, to fight and scuffle for the dainties spread so liberally before them.

"Little imps! how voracious they are!" said Charlotte, with a laugh. Her quick ears told her everything that was going forward. Two more liberal handfuls were scattered by Charlotte, and then she sat listening, with a pleased smile on her face, to the busy proceedings of the tiny animals around her.

"But where is my gentle Attila?" murmured Charlotte. "Where is the redoubtable chief of this sharp-toothed robber horde—of these tiny barbarians, who respect neither places nor persons, who know neither love nor gratitude, nor any law but their own hunger? They would eat me, who am their friend, if I were dead and they could get at me. Ugh!"

There was one mouse that was nearly twice the size of any of his fellows, a mouse that had parted with half his tail in some difficulty, and, as if in answer to Charlotte's appeal, he now scrambled up her night-dress, and began to peer greedily about her lap.

"Ah, ruffian, here thou art!" said Charlotte in a pleased voice, giving him to eat out of her hand. "What, still hungry! Here then, take thy fill and be happy! Wouldst thou, too, show thy gratitude by nibbling at poor Charlotte if she were dead? 'Tis thy nature, I suppose, not to know better. Playful little imp! I like thee, and yet I detest thee. I have half a mind to get a little amusement out of thee, by hanging thee on a minature gallows which I have somewhere among the rubbish in my boxes. How would'st thou like to dangle in the wind for half an hour? We would consult thy susceptibilities by making thy halter a silken one. But no, thou hast done nothing to deserve such a fate. Thou art one of the few creatures in this world who care a little for Charlotte Herne. All cupboard love, my dear Mr. Browncoat; the plated article, I am quite aware; but, as the times go, that is as much as one can reasonably expect."

Charlotte's pet having eaten its fill, began to frisk about her, climbing up her arms, and on to her shoulders, and finally nestling into a warm fold in her shawl, while Charlotte sat perfectly still, only expressing her satisfaction by an almost inaudible purr; the rest of

the mice, meanwhile, flitting round her chair, or chasing each other madly across the floor.

But sitting still was not one of Charlotte's virtues, and the effort soon wearied her. Drawing her favourite from the warm position he occupied in her shawl, she petted and caressed him for a little while.

"Thou must go now, little one," she said. "Thy company is pleasant, but slightly monotonous. If thou couldst only talk to me, only whisper me a little remark now and then, how nice that would be! Many a sly piece of family history must be known to thee; many a dark secret must be hived in thy tiny brain; and yet thou hast never a word! There, go; I have no patience with such dullards! Bon soir, messieurs et mesdames. Tchut, tchut! How the little wretches run!"

Charlotte rose from her chair, yawned, and stretched her arms. "What next?" she said. "Shall we say bed? or a little music? The latter, by all means. To-night I feel gay. 'My bosom's lord sits lightly on his throne.' What is that song which begins, 'I love to dance by moonlight?' It reminds me of something."

On a shelf in one corner of the loft was a musical-box of ancient construction, and possessed of a voice that age had rendered somewhat weak and piping. This old-fashioned instrument Charlotte now brought out of its retirement, and proceeded to wind up; and when that operation was completed, she placed it on her chair, and then put the chair just outside the square of moonlight on the floor. The box began to play an old-world set of quadrilles. Charlotte took up a position a short distance from the music, and bowed to an imaginary partner. Then, at the proper moment, she advanced with the skirts of her night-robe held daintily between thumb and finger, so as not to impede her movements, and her little bare feet glancing in the moonlight; and so, in keeping with the music, she danced one figure after another with her imaginary partner, in a stately and decorous style, till the set was completed. The small talk customary on such occasions was not pretermitted by Charlotte.

"Thanks, no. I have had one glass of wine already," she said; "and young ladies, you know, ought to be very abstemious. Now I call that downright flattery. My eyes are no more like violets than yours are like—well, I won't say what they are like, because I have not observed them sufficiently to know whether they are like anything or nothing—No, I am not cruel; only plain-spoken—Yes, I will give you a spray out of my bouquet, since you press so earnestly for one; only when you tell me you will keep it for ever, I know that you are quizzing me. I suppose you have told the same little fib to-night to half-a-dozen other young ladies. Such trifles don't require much invention, and when told with that little plaintive air, which becomes you so nicely, can hardly fail of success.—No, not cruel, as I told you before; only plain-spoken.—Yes, I am very fond of dancing, when I have an agreeable partner.—You can take

the latter half of the sentence as applying to yourself if you choose; only mind which way it cuts.—Oh, I've no objection to dance with you again, provided you can find a vacant line on my card.—You cannot? I thought not. For the present, then, good-bye."

"Heigho!" said Charlotte wearily, as the last tinkle of the box died away. "The music is over, and the moonlight is dying; I think I had better go back to bed." She did not fail to greet the skeleton at the door as she passed out of the room. "Au revoir, captain," she said. "I suppose I shall find you here next time I come. Till then, adieu!"

She paused for a moment at the green-baize door which separated her rooms from the rest of the house. "Oh, my darling, my darling!" she cried plaintively. "May peaceful sleep and happy dreams be yours!"

CHAPTER XII.

CHARLOTTE'S SECOND DISCOVERY.

THE days immediately following Charlotte's discovery that her eyesight was coming back to her were the happiest that she had known for several years. To her the recovery of sight meant far more than was implied by the mere words. She had fully persuaded herself that it would be no very difficult task to win the heart of her cousin Hugh when once the barrier that seemed to shut out love and leave room for pity only to enter should be removed. She had daily and hourly proofs of his affection for her; she had his own assertion that he was heart-whole and fancy-free, and she believed it. During the five years that he had practised in Helsingham he had walked unscathed beneath the fire of ladies' eyes; what more natural, then, than that he should succumb at last to one of whom he was already so fond, and whose love for him was of no threadbare, makeshift pattern, but warp and woof of her inmost being? Therefore it was that Charlotte watched with an intense, almost tragic, interest the slow breaking of that dawn which was to end the long night of her blindness.

And very slowly it did break. As yet, all that could be discerned of it were dim, doubtful glimmerings, only to be known from absolute darkness by being a shade less intense than that which had gone before. She was as one gazing into a fog that was brightening by imperceptible degrees, but through which, as yet, only the faintest outlines of any object were visible.

She kept her secret bravely, as she promised herself from the first that she would do, intending some day to surprise Hugh: and even Tib, who in most matters was as sharp as a needle, was in this one without suspicion.

Hugh did not fail to notice that of late Charlotte had seemed brighter and happier than he had ever known her to be since her

accident; but he took no notice of the change to Charlotte herself. "Her regrets are dying out one by one," he said to himself, "and after a while she will learn to be content under her affliction."

But, besides Hugh's undoubted fondness for Charlotte, she possessed an interest for him from a professional point of view. She was for him a psychological study, the lights and shadows of which were abnormal and strangely mixed; and, whenever he had an hour to spare for her company, he delighted in trying to disentangle the knot of her ever-varying changes of mood and feeling. But the riddle of her heart he never tried to read, and thereby missed finding the key to the vagaries of her brain.

One morning, on going upstairs after breakfast to her own room as usual, Charlotte discovered that the housemaid, after sweeping the carpet, had neglected to dust the furniture. On taking hold of a chair, her delicate sense of touch at once told her that the thin coating of dust had not been removed. Muttering something under her breath, she rang the bell violently.

The offending domestic was not long in making her appearance—a stout, country-built girl, with a face that was a curious mixture of cunning and stupidity. Charlotte turned on her like a little tigress.

"You have neglected to dust my room this morning," she said; "why?"

She spoke with clenched fingers and set teeth, and there was something about Charlotte's passionate bursts which generally gave the idea that if at such a moment she held a dagger in her hand, she would spring upon the offender and annihilate him with a blow.

"I truly beg your pardon, miss," said the frightened housemaid, turning first red and then white, "but I quite forgot to dust your room; and the housekeeper, she kep' me downstairs so busy that——"

"That will do," said Charlotte contemptuously. "You forgot! You would forget your head if it were loose—not that it would matter much for any use you make of it. Get the room done immediately."

The servant disappeared to fetch her duster, for, in common with those of her class who had lived under Dr. Randolph's roof before her, she stood in great dread of Charlotte. There was something so weird and uncanny about the blind girl, something that seemed to remove her so far out of the category of ordinary sightless people; she was so spiteful and unforgiving, and said such queer things about one, and was altogether such an uncomfortable sort of person to live under, that servants, who began by pitying her and then grew to dislike her, were not long in passing from that stage into one of superstitious awe, and ended by giving notice ignominiously and fleeing from a character they could so little comprehend.

Charlotte was pacing the room slowly, with a malicious smile on her set, colourless face, when the housemaid came back two minutes later.

"By the by, Jane," she said, "did I not promise you a week or two ago that I would get your fortune told for you?" There was something so honeyed and caressing in the way she now spoke, the change from the venomed passion that had barbed her words only a minute or two before was so sudden and complete that Jane's instincts, although they were none of the subtlest, whispered to her to beware.

"Yes, miss," she answered with a little hesitation; "you were kind enough to say that you would get my fortune told for me."

"Well, Jane, I have not forgotten to do what I promised," answered Charlotte. "I have seen the wise woman, and she has cast your nativity, and has found out a great many things about your future life."

"Lawks, miss! I hope they are all on 'em good," said Jane, pausing with the duster in her hand.

"Some of them good, and some of them bad, as falls to the lot of most of us in this world."

"Yes, miss. Oh, do please tell me more!" urged Jane, whose desire to read the future was quite equal to that of many persons much higher on the social ladder than herself.

"If I remember rightly, you told me that you were born at twenty minutes past two on the morning of the 8th of June, just twenty years ago!"

"Yes, miss, that was the time. My mother put it down in the old Bible at home."

"And you have a mole on your right shoulder and another on your left wrist?"

"Just so, miss; that's exactly what I told you."

"Well, I went to the wise woman, and told her all this," said Charlotte, "and gave her some money; and she told me to go back in three days, and she would have the horoscope ready. I went at the time she had named, and there she had it all ready written out for me. I don't suppose there's much truth in it, Jane, but I dare say you would like to know what the paper says?"

"Oh yes, miss, please tell me!" said Jane, on her knees and ceasing from her dusting, in her anxiety to hear the predictions of the "wise woman," in whose powers of vaticination she was a firm believer.

"The paper states, in the first place, that you are loved by a young man with black hair, and a slight squint in one of his eyes, who is a carpenter by trade."

"That's my Bill all over!" said the awe-struck Jane, in a subdued voice.

"The paper goes on to say that this young man has been courting you for three years and a half, and that you will be married in about two years from this time. It adds, further, that you had a valentine last February from another young man, and that the black-haired young man was very jealous and angry when you showed it to him."

"Oh, miss! however did she learn all that?" said Jane, with an uncomfortable tingling of the nerves. "It's all true, every bit; and we are to be married in two years' time, if all goes well."

"She read it in the stars, I suppose," said crafty Charlotte. "How else could she know so many circumstances of your life?"

The fact was, that Charlotte had heard all these particulars from Tib, who often spent a spare hour, when her mistress did not want her, in the kitchen; and who had there heard Jane, in her confidential moments, discussing her love affairs with the other servants.

"Yes, you are to be married in two years," resumed Charlotte; "and—but I won't distress you by telling you what comes next. You are happy now; why should I make you miserable?"

"Oh, miss! you must please tell me, whether it's good or bad," pleaded Jane earnestly. "If it's bad news, I'll try to bear it; but to keep it from me now would be far worse than telling me."

"My poor Jane! Well, the wise woman's prediction is this: That you will be married, as I said before, and that you and your husband will live happily together for twelve months. At the end of that time, your husband will take to drinking. He will go on from bad to worse; he will break up your little home, and bring you to poverty; and, in the end, he will die mad drunk in a hospital."

"Oh, Heaven! can all this be true?" cried the white-faced Jane, as she rose tremblingly to her feet.

"Unfortunately, that is not all," resumed the pitiless Charlotte. "Your child—for you will have one little girl—will be stolen from you by gipsies; and you, in your despair at being thus bereft of all you loved on earth, will put an end to your sufferings by drowning yourself."

Charlotte paused and listened. The frightened girl was crying; and as the sound fell on Charlotte's ears, the malicious smile crept over her face again. "Soft-hearted fool! I'll teach you to neglect my room another time," she murmured below her breath; then, as the girl's sobbing still continued, she laughed one of her little, cold-blooded laughs. Not to have saved her life, could she, at that moment, have overcome the impulse.

Jane straightened her neck at the sound, and turned a sharp, suspicious glance on Charlotte, and began to wipe her eyes with the corner of her apron.

"Did the wise woman really and truly write down all that you have just told me?" she asked.

"Of course she did!" answered Charlotte, in a decisive tone. "Do you think I am telling you a lie?"

"Then, perhaps, Miss Charlotte, you will kindly show me the paper where it is all set down?"

"Oh, I burnt the paper!" said ready Charlotte. "There was no use in keeping it, you know, when I knew its contents so well."

"But how did you know what the paper said, when you couldn't see to read it?" persisted Jane.

"Oh, the wise woman herself read it over to me three times, and that was quite enough. After that, I knew the contents of it by heart."

"And then you burnt the paper?"

"And then I burnt the paper. Why not?"

"Why, just this," said the excited Jane. "I don't believe a word of what you've been telling me. It's just a heap of lies, and nothing else. You have made it all up out of your own head to frighten me, because you've got a spite against me. My Bill kill himself with drinking, indeed! Why, he's a teetotaler, and hasn't tasted a drop of drink these five years! I must say, that I think it's a great shame that a young lady like you hasn't something better to employ her time with than venting her spite on them as is under her by trying to frighten 'em. There'll be a judgment on you some of these days for your goings on—just mark my words; though, indeed, for the matter of that, there's something about you now that's not right; for who ever before saw a young woman of your age with grey hair and ——"

"What is that you say?" said Charlotte quickly. She had been so taken aback by Jane's sudden onslaught, that, till that moment, she had not been able to offer a word in reply.

"There! now I've put my foot in it," said Jane, on the verge of crying again.

"Will you please repeat what you said just now about my hair?" said Charlotte, in quiet, measured tones.

"I said what I oughtn't to have said, miss; and I beg your pardon for it," said Jane apologetically. "But not another word shall you get out of me, good or bad; so I'll just wish you good morning. No, miss, it's no use your asking me; wild horses shouldn't get another word out of me. I've put my foot in it, and I'll go."

And go she did; but on the stairs she turned, and opening the door of Charlotte's room, so as just to admit her head, she said, "You've no occasion, miss, to take any notice of what I said about your hair; it was only a bit of my impert'nence."

Her hair grey! Was there, could there be any truth in what the girl had said? Her first impulse was to ring the bell and summon one of the other servants and question her. But, no; that would be too humiliating. I'll wait till Tib comes," she said to herself, "and force the truth from *her*."

But, indeed, was it not utterly preposterous to think that there could be a syllable of truth in the vile words made use of by Jane? Her hair, ever since she could recollect anything, had been of a beautiful chestnut hue—other people beside herself had called it beautiful; and she distinctly remembered Hugh saying to her one morning, only a week or two ago, "Those chestnut tresses of yours

Charley, must take up a good slice of your time every morning, seeing the elaborate style of dressing them to which you have lately taken." How, then, was it possible that her hair could be grey, unless Hugh, and all her other friends, had entered into a conspiracy to deceive her? And yet—and with a sinking heart she confessed the fact to herself—Jane's unpremeditated words had rung in her ears, at the moment of their utterance, like the very accents of truth. And then, the girl's evident desire to retract what she had said, and her refusal to add any confirmation to a statement which had apparently slipped off her tongue's end before she knew what was coming. How was Charlotte to sum it all up? To wait for Tib, as she told herself before, was evidently the only thing that could be done; but, then, Tib would not be here for nearly four hours yet, and she, Charlotte, was, oh! so wildly impatient to have her doubts set at rest at once and for ever.

Neither her work nor her music had any charms for her this morning; she could only walk her room restlessly and unceasingly like some tameless, imprisoned creature, and count off one quarter after another as they were chimed by the little clock on the mantelpiece.

Tib came in punctually as the clock struck two. She closed the door timidly behind her, and advanced into the room. Her quick eyes detected in a moment that something more than ordinary was amiss with Charlotte.

"Lock the door, and come here," said Charlotte, bringing her weary walk to an end.

Tib obeyed, but not without certain inward misgivings. Was Charlotte going to pinch her, or pull her hair, or box her ears? Had some little bird told about that half pot of jam given her by the housekeeper the day before yesterday?

Taking the girl firmly by the shoulders, and stooping so as to bring her face on a level with Tib's, Charlotte said, "Tib, what—colour—is—my hair?"

"A bootiful chestnut, Miss Charlotte," answered Tib, without a moment's hesitation.

"Little liar!" hissed Charlotte. "Tell me the truth, or I will stitch up your eyelids, and then lock you up all night in the loft with Captain Bones. Do you hear? The truth!—the truth!—the truth!"

Tib trembled and hesitated; then she tried to writhe out of Charlotte's grasp, but the blind girl's fingers held her like a vice.

"Vile little imp! do you refuse to answer my question?" said Charlotte. "What is—the—colour—of—my—hair? The truth—do you hear, or it will be worse for you."

"Grey."

"Oh!" She let go the girl, and caught at a chair, and sank into it as one suddenly smitten with a pain that was beyond endurance;

and so lay for a minute or two, with her head resting on the back of the chair, in utter silence.

Then she raised her head, and beckoning to Tib to come near, she put out her hand, and grasped that of the girl. Once, twice, she essayed to speak; her lips formed the words, but no sound came from them. Then she gave a great sigh, and rousing herself by a further effort, she said pitifully, "Tib, how long has my hair been—grey?"

"Ever since I first knowed you, Miss Charlotte."

"Oh!" Then, after a pause, "Why did you say my hair was chestnut, Tib?"

"The Doctor, Miss Charlotte, he told me, the first day I came, that on no account was I to let out that I knew your hair was grey."

"That will do. You can go now, Tib. I shall not want you any more to-day."

But Tib stood her ground, fingering a corner of her apron nervously. The sight of Charlotte's white, drawn face, and the agony that shone out of her sightless eyes, touched the girl's simple heart and swept all grievances from her memory.

"Oh, Miss Charlotte! don't please take on in that way," she said, and then her words were stopped by tears.

But Charlotte waved her away, though with nothing of her usual impatience, and her lips said, "Leave me, leave me," although Tib failed to catch the words. So, still crying, the girl went slowly out of the room, and closed the door gently behind her.

Then Charlotte, feeling that she was alone, got up, and groped her way to the door with outstretched hands, as though she had been smitten with blindness that day for the first time, and locked it. Then she went back to her chair, a large easy one, built originally for some person of ample proportions, and coiling herself up in it, she let her head droop forward on to her knees; and crouching thus, in tearless silence, allowed hour after hour to pass unheeded away.

The housekeeper sent up word that dinner was ready, but she neither moved nor answered, and a second summons at tea-time was treated with equal indifference. Later on, when Hugh came home, they told him that Miss Charlotte had been locked up in her own room ever since morning, and had refused to come down to her meals. So Hugh went upstairs himself, and knocked at the green-baize door, and asked Charlotte what was the matter with her, and whether she was not coming downstairs to keep him company for an hour before bed-time. She roused herself sufficiently to answer his appeal. "I am not well, and I do not intend going downstairs to-night," she said.

But Hugh persisted. "If you are not well," he said, "there is all the more need why I should see you, and do what I can to make you better."

"I cannot see you to-night. Pray go, and leave me in peace," was all that Charlotte vouchsafed to reply; and then she resumed

her former position in the chair, and neither stirred nor spoke again till the clock struck midnight.

Then she got out of the chair, and stretched her cramped, chilled limbs. She was one mass of aches. Her head ached, her heart ached, every bone in her body ached. She pressed her fingers to her hot, tearless eyes; and then, with a weary sigh, she staggered forward into her bedroom, and sinking on to the bed without undressing, she drew a corner of the coverlet over her, and tried to forget her misery in sleep.

CHAPTER XIII.

AT BROOK LODGE.

When Miss Davenant, on her way back to the post-office, was overtaken by Esther Sarel, and had the telegram put into her hands which informed her that an accident had befallen her sister, she at once turned her face towards Irongate House, and hurried home as quickly as possible, first despatching Esther to the station to inquire when the next train would start for Milhampton. Her imagination, already excited by what she had gone through at the post-office, at once took alarm, and pictured Trix as dying or dead; and such a thought was sufficient to drive all lesser considerations from her mind, leaving room only for a burning desire to hasten to her poor darling as fast as steam could carry her, and ascertain the worst with her own eyes.

Esther was back at Irongate House almost as soon as Margaret. The next train would start in three-quarters of an hour. Esther ran for a cab, while Margaret packed her little bag and gave a few parting instructions to Mrs. Greene, the housekeeper. In this sudden trouble that had come upon her she had for a time forgotten all about the events at the post-office; but now, at the last moment, as she stood with the bag in her hand listening for the wheels of the coming cab, she heard, as it were, the whisper of some hideous familiar: "What have you done with the letter?" It seemed days ago, instead of one short hour only, since she had been chatting gaily with Miss Ivimpey; since she had been beset by that horrible temptation, and had bartered away her peace of mind for ever; since she had dipped her foot into that vast ocean of crime which surges round the world unceasingly, to touch which is to infect the soul with moral leprosy, from which with infinite difficulty only, and after many bitter strivings, can it ever be cleansed again.

She hurried back to her own room and locked the door; and then, with a quick, frantic gesture, she snatched the crumpled letter from her bosom. The past was irrevocable; neither prayers nor lamentations could render nugatory the deed she had done. But the secret should be locked in her own heart; she would have no mute witness

rising at some unexpected moment to accuse her of this thing in the face of the world. With a steady hand she held the letter over the lighted candle, and in another minute nothing would have been left of it but ashes; but just as it was browning to the flame, the hollow echo of a footstep sounded through the corridor outside, and scared her from her purpose. She drew back the letter, and with white face and straining eyes stared over her shoulder at the door—but only for one moment; the next, with a bitter smile at her own weakness, she recognised the footstep as that of the old housekeeper on her way to her own room.

A sudden change of purpose! She would not burn the letter. After all, it might so happen that some happy occasion would offer itself for her to reveal everything to Dr. Randolph, and give him the letter, trusting to the goodness of his heart to find forgiveness for what she had done. But even granting that no such opportunity should ever arise; or that if it did, her want of courage should preclude her from taking advantage of it; would it, even in that case, be wise on her part to destroy the letter? Would it not, in fact, be equivalent to building up between herself and that narrow path of rectitude from which she had wandered, a wall whose limits she might never overpass? So long as the letter remained in her keeping, there was just a faint possibility that the wretched deed of which she had been guilty might ultimately work itself out in some inscrutable way to a happy issue. Destroy the letter and even this far-away hope would be denied her.

The letter must be preserved.

On a chest of drawers in her dressing-room, stood a small ebony casket inlaid with silver, and having Margaret's initials engraved on a plate let into the lid. It had been a birthday gift from her father when she was quite a girl, and was almost the sole relic now remaining to her of that pleasant, far-away time. This casket was seldom locked, and was used by Margaret merely as a receptacle for various odds and ends of her property which had no proper location of their own. But underneath this trumpery the casket had a false bottom, the secret of which was known to Margaret alone; and it was here that, after a brief deliberation, she determined to temporarily conceal the letter. She would have time enough to seek out a more effectual hiding-place after her return from Milhampton; meanwhile, this would do excellently.

So the letter was hidden; and Margaret gave a great sigh of relief as it dropped from her fingers into the casket. It seemed—fallaciously enough, one must admit—as if the weight of her guilt were in some degree lessened, now that she no longer carried so terrible a witness about with her. How her head ached! But she had no time, just now, to give more than a passing thought to such a trifle. She heard the wheels of the cab crunching the gravel outside, and at the sound all her thoughts flew back to Trix, with a pang

of self-reproach that they had left her poor darling even for a moment. One last look at the casket, and then she hurried away.

Midnight was just striking as the train containing Margaret Davenant drew up at Milhampton station. Madame Ducange and her English brother-in-law were waiting on the platform in expectation of her coming. Madame—a little withered Frenchwoman of sixty, dressed in a black silk calash and lace mittens in place of gloves and bonnet—received her old pupil with tearful eyes, and a kiss, slightly tinctured with snuff, on each cheek; but it was her quiet, matter-of fact brother-in-law who at once calmed Margaret's anxieties as to the condition of Trix. That young lady, he told Margaret, was neither dying, nor likely to die for an indefinite period to come. She had slipped as she was stepping down the two steps leading into the garden, and had sprained her ankle rather severely. But worse than the pain arising from the fall, was the shock to her system; and when, towards evening, some slight symptoms of fever set in, nothing would satisfy Madame but telegraphing for Margaret, despite the doctor's assurance that Trix would be better on the morrow.

And better she was, greatly to Margaret's satisfaction, although still unable to get up. Next morning, however, she was nearly well, and Margaret set out by the noon train on her return to Helsingham, leaving Trix, somewhat reluctantly, to spend a couple more days with Madame Ducange, who would fain have had Margaret stay too. But Margaret had that on her mind which unfitted her for all social intercourse; for now that she was easy on Trix's account, her thoughts went back instinctively to that ugly business of the purloined letter, and dwelt on it with dull, unwearying persistency, as though it were a deed big enough, and black enough, to fill the scope of heaven and earth, and dwarf into utter disproportion all the other actions, good and bad, of her antecedent life. As yet she was new to the companionship; she had not learnt the art of mastering her demon, and keeping him fastened up out of sight of the world, only letting him out to torment her in darkness and solitude, when no other soul was by to see her misery.

"It was not I, Margaret Davenant, who did that accursed thing; it was a fiend that possessed me," she kept whispering to herself as she rode homeward in the train. "But nothing, nothing, nothing can ever take away the stain!"

Her anxious eyes fixed themselves on the casket the moment she entered her own room. It was there, just as she had left it, and had apparently not been touched since. With a quick, spasmodic effort, very different from her usual stately, slow-timed movements, she crossed the floor and opened the secret drawer. The briefest possible glance was sufficient, the letter was still there. She shut the drawer with a shudder, and then locked the upper lid of the casket. After all, it was the safest hiding-place for the letter that she could think of.

As regarded the question of reparation, she at once confessed to

herself that, after so long a time, she no longer possessed the requisite moral courage to avow what she had done. No, not even to kind-hearted Dr. Randolph, to whom the letter was addressed. She had lowered herself for ever in her own eyes, but she could not bear to repeat the process before the eyes of another, and that other a man whom she liked and respected, and whose good opinion she was anxious to retain. "What is done cannot be undone," she said to herself. "But no living soul shall ever know that it was I who took the letter."

Ah, Margaret Davenant, if this indeed be so, why that faint, troubled consciousness that the Nemesis which waits on crime is already on your track? Why do you so often start up in the dreary watches of the night, deeming that you hear the far-away, muffled sound of "footsteps upon wool" advancing nearer and nearer by devious paths whose issues the future alone can reveal?

In the course of the afternoon of the day of her return, Margaret received the following note:—

"Brook Lodge, *Friday.*

"CARA MIA,—Pray take pity on a poor mortal and come and see me for an hour or two this afternoon. This is vacation time with you, so that you cannot plead your pupils as an excuse. Robert is out of town, and I am getting quite low-spirited for want of society. I will send the brougham for you in an hour.

"Your affectionate friend,

"H. CARDALE."

Miss Davenant sent a line in reply, saying what time she would be at Brook Lodge, but declining the offer of the brougham. Her first thought had been to excuse herself on the plea of illness. She felt unfitted just yet for any society save that of her own pursuing thoughts, which, let her twist and double as she might, still bayed after her, like thirsty bloodhounds that no device of hers could throw off the trail. "If I stay here alone much longer, I think I shall go crazy," she said to herself. "I dread society, and yet it is only in society that I can escape from myself. I will go to Brook Lodge. If I cannot be the Margaret Davenant that I was a week ago, at least the world shall never suspect that I am changed."

As Margaret walked through sheltered lane and sunny field on her way to Brook Lodge—for this afternoon she chose rather to skirt the outside of the town than walk through the busy streets—she felt glad that she had decided to go. Both mind and body seemed to drink in draughts of fresh, pure life, and the sweet influences of Nature shed themselves like balm over her troubled spirit. She thought of the woman she was going to see, and for the first time, Margaret experienced a sense of unworthiness at venturing into the presence of her friend. She knew well whence this strange new feeling proceeded. Alas! that it would never be strange to her again.

Mrs. Cardale, a widow and childless, was the sister of Mr. Robert

Bruhn, the largest manufacturer in Helsingham. After her husband's death, Mrs. Cardale had come to superintend her brother's household, but failing health had long obliged her to pass the winter and spring of each year in Italy or the south of France, so that she really spent only about five months out of every twelve at Helsingham. Margaret's acquaintance with Mrs. Cardale had arisen through her having to go on one occasion to Brook Lodge in place of Miss Easterbrook, who was ill at the time, to answer certain inquiries as to the terms and constitution of the school, which Mrs. Cardale was desirous of making in the interest of one of her friends who lived at a distance. The acquaintanceship thus begun quickly ripened into a friendship that was based on genuine liking and mutual esteem; for, the point of contact once struck, there was too much similarity in the tastes and dispositions of these two women, despite their difference in the social scale, for them not to gravitate naturally each to the other, and a week seldom passed without seeing Margaret a visitor at Brook Lodge. Mrs. Cardale only went out for an hour now and then, on sunny afternoons. Not infrequently she would call with the carriage at Irongate House, and carry Margaret away with her for a pleasant drive into the country.

Brook Lodge stood within its own grounds, on a pleasant elevation half a mile out of Helsingham. It was a substantial, red-brick residence, evidently built for comfort rather than for show; with spacious and lofty rooms, with wide passages upstairs and down, and with a noble entrance-hall. Substantial comfort was its prevailing characteristic; and yet you could not be long in Brook Lodge without discovering that its owner was a man of taste and education. The pictures, although few in number, were all good, and all originals; and were distributed about the house, a few in one room and a few in another, as the taste or whim of Mr. Bruhn had dictated. The engravings were especially fine, and were worth a small fortune in themselves. Literature was not forgotten. Except the dining-room, nearly every room in the house had its own special book-case; even the bedrooms were no exception to this rule. For Mr. Bruhn chose that both himself and his guests should have a friendly author at their elbow whenever they might be in the humour to enjoy his company: whether it were in the spare half-hour before dressing for dinner; or as you lay "simmering" in bed of a morning, too wakeful to sleep again, and yet not inclined for getting up; or in that other odd half-hour when "all the house was mute," as you sat toasting your toes before your dressing-room fire previously to slipping between the sheets; or, in short, whenever you might feel that a book was your best companion.

Margaret Davenant never entered Brook Lodge without feeling that in some such place as this her home ought to be. The sharp tooth of poverty had bitten deeply into her soul. In the days of her up-hill struggle against the world, when every shilling seemed more

than a shilling, and required careful consideration as to how it could be laid out to the greatest advantage, she had necessarily seen somewhat of the mean and sordid side of life's lining; her mind had been harassed by the petty cares and anxieties ever attendant on a lack of pence in this age of many wants; yet, despite all this, she never for got that the associations of her childhood and youth had been those with which wealth usually surrounds itself. Therefore, to cross the threshold of Brook Lodge, or of any other well-appointed house, was for Margaret to feel herself, in some unconscious sort of way, more of a lady than at other times; as though she had some inalienable property in all the evidences of taste and refinement which she saw around her, and breathed, as of right, that finer atmosphere in which no vulgar nature can live.

"Here comes my stately Margaret! How glad I am to see you!" exclaimed Mrs. Cardale as Margaret was ushered by a solemn servant into the invalid's carefully-shaded room.

"And are you any better to-day, dear Mrs. Cardale?" said Margaret, as the two friends met hand to hand.

"No worse in bodily health, I think, Margaret, but low-spirited and dull. Miss Carruthers wearies me so much that I was glad to give her holiday for a couple of days; and Robert is away in London."

The speaker was one of those delicate, frail-looking women one sometimes meets, whose little lamp of life requires to be carefully shielded from every rude blast: a rare exotic needing the shelter of a conservatory to protect it from our inclement English skies.

"I am afraid," said Margaret with a smile, "that I shall never succeed in winning Miss Carruthers's good opinion."

"You will no longer be the Margaret Davenant of my heart when Betsy Carruthers looks upon you with unjaundiced eyes," said Mrs. Cardale. "Both you and I are as lost sheep in her sight. And yet she is a good woman in her way, mechanically and methodically good; but, oh! such terribly dull company in bad weather. I have made up my mind to give her her *congé* in autumn, for I cannot bear the idea of having to pass another winter in her society. And now we will have tea," added Mrs. Cardale; "I have waited purposely for you. Afterwards, we will drive as far as Oldenshaw, where there is a wonderful new conservatory which I am longing to see. Just touch the bell, dear, please. You really deserve a good scolding for not letting me send the brougham for you."

"The day was so pleasant and breezy that I thought a walk through the fields would do me good."

"I am sure you get walking enough at other times, without having to trudge all the way to Brook Lodge to see a sick woman. But I know your wilful disposition of old, and suppose that you must have your own way in such matters. You will be a good, kind soul, and read to me for an hour this evening, will you not?"

"With pleasure, if you wish it."

"I do wish it, very much. It always does me good to hear you read; and poor Miss Carruthers is not here to-day to scowl at you with jealous eyes. I expect to have the Laureate's long looked-for new poem to-morrow. I told Dawson to send me a couple of copies as early as possible, one of which I intend for Miss Margaret Davenant."

Tea was served in a dainty service of egg-shell china, much affected by Mrs. Cardale, who averred that only from porcelain of the thinnest and purest could the genuine flavour of the Chinese leaf be educed.

They were still sipping their bohea and chatting away on twenty indifferent topics, when the sound of a man's voice downstairs made Mrs. Cardale's cheek flush, and a little cry of pleasure to burst from her lips. "That is Robert's voice!" she exclaimed. "He has come back a day before his time."

Scarcely were the words out of her mouth when Mr. Bruhn came hastily into the room, and after kissing his sister, turned and greeted Miss Davenant with much cordiality.

CHAPTER XIV.

MR. BRUHN.

Mr. Robert Bruhn, of Helsingham, manufacturer and magistrate, was about forty-two years old; broad-set, well-built and nearly six feet in height; with hair, beard and moustache that, in these latter days, were slightly grizzled. His eyes were large, grey and full of vivacity; and his well-cut, aquiline features had a grim, quiet earnestness about them, that, somehow, put people in mind of the face of an old Crusader or Knight Templar seen somewhere in effigy; for about such faces there is a strange family likeness. In Mr. Bruhn's appearance there was nothing careless or slovenly; his clothes were always well and fashionably made; and he was so carefully groomed and got up, without recourse to artificial means, that he was generally taken to be a much younger man than he really was.

"But what has brought you home to-day, Robert?" asked Mrs. Cardale as soon as the first greetings were over. "I understood that your time was not up till to-morrow."

"I managed to finish my business late last night; and, as I was getting anxious to be at home again, I decided to return this morning instead of giving myself a day's holiday, as I at first intended to do. And so you really think that you are no worse than when I left home? I am delighted to hear it."

"Dear Robert! But we could have spared you another day, sir. It was foolish of you not to secure your holiday while you had an opportunity of doing so. Now that you are here, you will take a cup of tea with us, will you not?"

"Not at this time of the day, thank you. Besides, I have no time

to stay just now. There are five days' letters at the office crying out to be opened and read."

"That everlasting business!" sighed Mrs. Cardale.

"Yes, that everlasting business!" answered her brother. "Sovereigns are not usually picked up in the street, Mrs. Cardale; it is necessary to work for them, and work hard, too, before they come to us. Be good enough to bear that little fact in mind next time you ——"

"Hold your tongue, sir, and tell me what you have brought me from town."

"Let me consider. Firstly, one box of Jouvin's gloves—size, six and a quarter; item, one crape shawl, marked *recherché* in the window of the establishment at which it was purchased, so that it must be something superior; item, the last new things in photographs; item, one jar of Indian preserve from Fortnum and Mason's, the same as before; together with a few other trifles that I don't remember just now."

"A thousand thanks; but the best present is yourself. I am glad you are safe at home again; there is always a vague sense of uneasiness upon me when you are away."

"Your anxiety for my welfare is quite refreshing, Etta. I am pleased to find you in such good spirits to-day—a result which I attribute entirely to Miss Davenant, whom I hope we shall see much oftener at Brook Lodge than we have done of late."

"You are very kind," said Margaret; "but it was only yesterday that I was debating the other side of the question with myself, and I came to the conclusion that it is not good for me to go much into society—such indulgences only tend to make me discontented with the prosaic duties of my position at Irongate House."

"Don't talk nonsense, Margaret," said Mrs. Cardale impetuously. "Change is good for everyone; you know that as well as I do; and if you shut yourself up, month after month, in that dismal old Irongate House, with no society but that of Mamma Easterbrook and her pupils; why, in that case, you will soon be in your grave."

"I have gone through much worse inflictions than that," said Margaret with a smile; "and yet I am here still."

"Well, I hope we shall see as much of you as possible," said Mr. Bruhn warmly. "My sister is somewhat fastidious in the choice of her friends. As a rule, she and the ladies of Helsingham do not get on together very well; and I value her so highly, that when I know she has found a friend after her own heart, I cannot but wish to see that friend under my roof as often as may be."

Margaret smiled, and then her heart gave a little sigh. "Ah! If they only knew all," she thought, "they would never care to see me here again."

"And now I really must go," said Mr. Bruhn, "or I shall not save this evening's post."

"You will not stay late to-night, Robert?" said Mrs. Cardale.

"No; I will try to be home again by eight. Good-bye, Etta. Good--bye, Miss Davenant, for the present. I hope to find you here when I return."

A few minutes later, the carriage came round, and the two ladies were driven five miles across country to Oldenshaw, where they visited the famous conservatory spoken of by Mrs. Cardale, who made several purchases of choice young plants for her fernery.

On their way home, said Margaret to Mrs. Cardale: "Mr. Bruhn does not seem to have much leisure time to call his own."

"No, indeed. He is always anxious, always busy. And yet there is no real necessity for all this hard work, because he might retire any day with an ample fortune; besides which, Robert is not like many so-called 'clever business men,' who, when they leave their offices, leave three-fourths of their intellect behind them, and are, in all other relations of life, the most commonplace of mortals. Robert was well educated, has read much, and is fond of travel; and he could find a thousand ways to dignify and render useful his well-earned leisure. I have seen this craving for work growing over him like a husk, becoming thicker and more difficult to break with each succeeding year, ever since that terrible time when he lost both wife and child in one brief summer day."

"Lost both wife and child!" said Margaret. "I did not know that Mr. Bruhn had ever been married."

"Probably not; you have not been long in Helsingham; and both with Robert and myself the subject is still such a painful one that we rarely allude to it. He married, very young, an old school friend of mine. It was a genuine love match on both sides, and a happier couple I have never seen. They had one child, a boy; a lovely little fellow, but delicate from his birth; and for the benefit of his health they went, when he was about two years old, to spend the summer months at a watering-place on the Welsh coast. Amy was an excellent swimmer, and very fond of bathing; but one unfortunate day she ventured out too far and had not sufficient strength left to swim back to shore; the tide, too, was just beginning to ebb, and she was carried out and drowned before anyone could get to her assistance. Poor, dear Amy! Her body was found among the rocks at low water. As if that was not enough for Robert to bear, his little Willy was taken ill the same evening and died at daybreak next morning. Twenty years have come and gone since that fatal day, but it still wrings my heart to speak of it."

There was silence for some minutes, and then Mrs. Cardale spoke again.

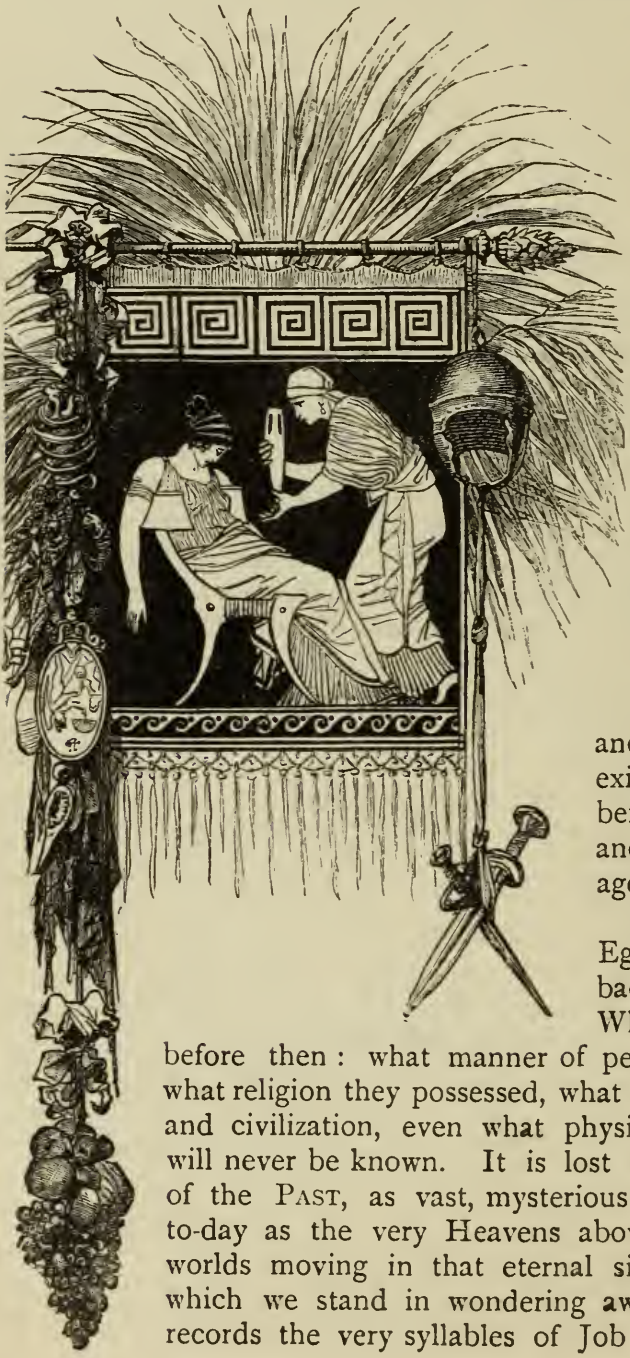
"Then it was, when he was left, as it were, alone in the world, that Robert began to seek in the cares and anxieties of business an opiate that might, in some small degree, soothe the sharp agony of his bereavement. He left it for time and hard work to cicatrize the

wound in his heart; and I am happy to think that, as years have rolled away, peace has come to him, and cheerfulness and content. More than that on this side the grave cannot be looked for. But under that grim, philosophic exterior which he presents to the world, I know that he carries about in his inmost heart a secret casket of tender regrets and chastened sorrow, into which no eye but mine is ever privileged to look; and once every year, on the anniversary of his loss, he makes a pilgrimage to that little country churchyard on the Welsh coast, that he may gaze once more on the grave of his lost treasures. At first, he merely sought in business some enforced relief for his tortured mind; but as time went on, he began to love his work for itself, and now it has become a pleasing tyranny, from which he no longer cares to free himself. This is all as it should be, I dare say; for a man without work of some kind to do is good for little—if only Robert did not make quite such a slave of himself; if only he would shift on to other shoulders some portion of that burden which he will persist in carrying himself, when there is no real necessity for him to do so. And that is just the point where he and I disagree, if we can be said ever to disagree; and what I particularly dread is, that after I shall be gone, when there will be no one to address even a word of remonstrance to him, he will go on, year after year, burying himself more deeply in those sordid business cares—and they do become sordid when twisted beyond their proper uses; that as he grows older, all his best qualities of head and heart will slowly deteriorate, and that he will sink at last into a hard, unlovely old age, with few cares, hopes or fears beyond those to be found within the four walls of his mill. Heaven preserve Robert Bruhn from such a fate! But see! those are the lights of Helsingham shining in the valley. Our drive is nearly at an end."

(To be continued.)

IN THE LOTUS LAND.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "Letters from Majorca," "The Bretons at Home," etc. etc.



THE most interesting history in the world is the history of Ancient Egypt. It goes back to times which seem to us now almost as remote as the period of Creation. Imagination can as easily conjure up the epoch when "the earth was without form and void, a darkness was upon the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters," as attempt to realize the ways and life of a people that existed five thousand years before the Christian Era, and, for all we know, in ages still farther removed.

The earliest records of Egyptian history take one back at least to this date. What was taking place before then: what manner of people, what occupation, what religion they possessed, what amount of intelligence and civilization, even what physical development: this will never be known. It is lost in that fathomless gulf of the Past, as vast, mysterious and remote to us of to-day as the very Heavens above with their countless worlds moving in that eternal silence of space before which we stand in wondering awe. In studying these records the very syllables of Job seem to recur to the

memory with a strange application: "Oh that my words were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever!" For it is due to the inscriptions and hieroglyphics upon the stones and tombs and monuments of the past, that much of the history of Ancient Egypt is known to us at all.

Until the key to these inscriptions was discovered, this history was buried in a mystery and obscurity as profound as the silence of the sphinx or the utterances of an oracle. Egyptologists were at variance one with another; all was a matter of surmise and speculation; these learned men, like doctors, were content to disagree. All that was known of this interesting and ancient people came from Herodotus, from Diodorus the Sicilian historian, and from Manetho of Sebennytus who lived under Ptolemy Philadelphus three hundred years before the Christian Era. Manetho, as High Priest of the Temple of Heliopolis, had charge of the sacred archives, and from these documents composed his History of Egypt. Heliopolis, the ancient city of the sun, is within a short drive of Cairo, lying to the N.E., but nothing of its greatness remains to this day excepting a solitary obelisk and the outer walls of the city. Unfortunately the history of Manetho has not descended to posterity, excepting a few fragments quoted by Josephus in his *Jewish Antiquities*, and a few other fragments found in Eusebius. But his List of Kings has been handed down to us in the writings of certain Christian chronologists, and in spite of the lapse of time, of frequent transcriptions and quotations, seems to have remained very much as he compiled it. This list is the only existing record of the earlier monarchs.

The history of Egypt is divided into five or seven great epochs or periods, comprising thirty-four dynasties.

The First Period consisted of the Ancient Empire, from the first to the eleventh Dynasty. The Second Period, or Middle Empire, from the eleventh to the eighteenth Dynasty. The Third Period, or New Empire, from the eighteenth to the thirty-first Dynasty. Then came Egypt under the Greeks, forming the thirty-second and thirty-third Dynasties, and a Fourth Period; next Egypt under the Romans, the thirty-fourth Dynasty and the Fifth Period: followed by the Conquest of Egypt by the Arabs and the reign of Mohammedanism. This in turn yielded to the Turks, and the Seventh Period, ending with the recognition of Mohammet Ali and the present vice-regal Dynasty.

The First, or Pagan Period, dated from the remotest records to the year 381 of the Christian Era: a total period of 5,385 years.

The Second, or Christian Period, from A.D. 381, when the Emperor Theodosius forbade the worship of heathen gods and confirmed by law the Christian religion, down to the year 640. During this period Egypt established the reign of the Byzantine Emperors, who held their court at Constantinople.

The Third Period was the Mussulman, dating from the conquest of

Egypt by the officers of Mahomet in the year 640. This conquest established Islamism in the country of the Pharaohs : a creed that, after a lapse of nearly thirteen centuries, still flourishes. The worship of the " False Prophet " owns its millions of followers.

The word Dynasty was first applied to the different groups or families of Pagan kings who reigned during the five thousand years before the dawn of Christianity. These Dynasties had different towns for their capital, at different periods of time. Memphis, Thebes and other places were in turn the seat of government, and each Dynasty is distinguished by the name of its capital. Besides these, there were Ethiopian, Persian, Greek and Roman Dynasties, as each of these nations invaded and conquered Egypt. As we have seen, the number of Dynasties amounted to thirty-four.

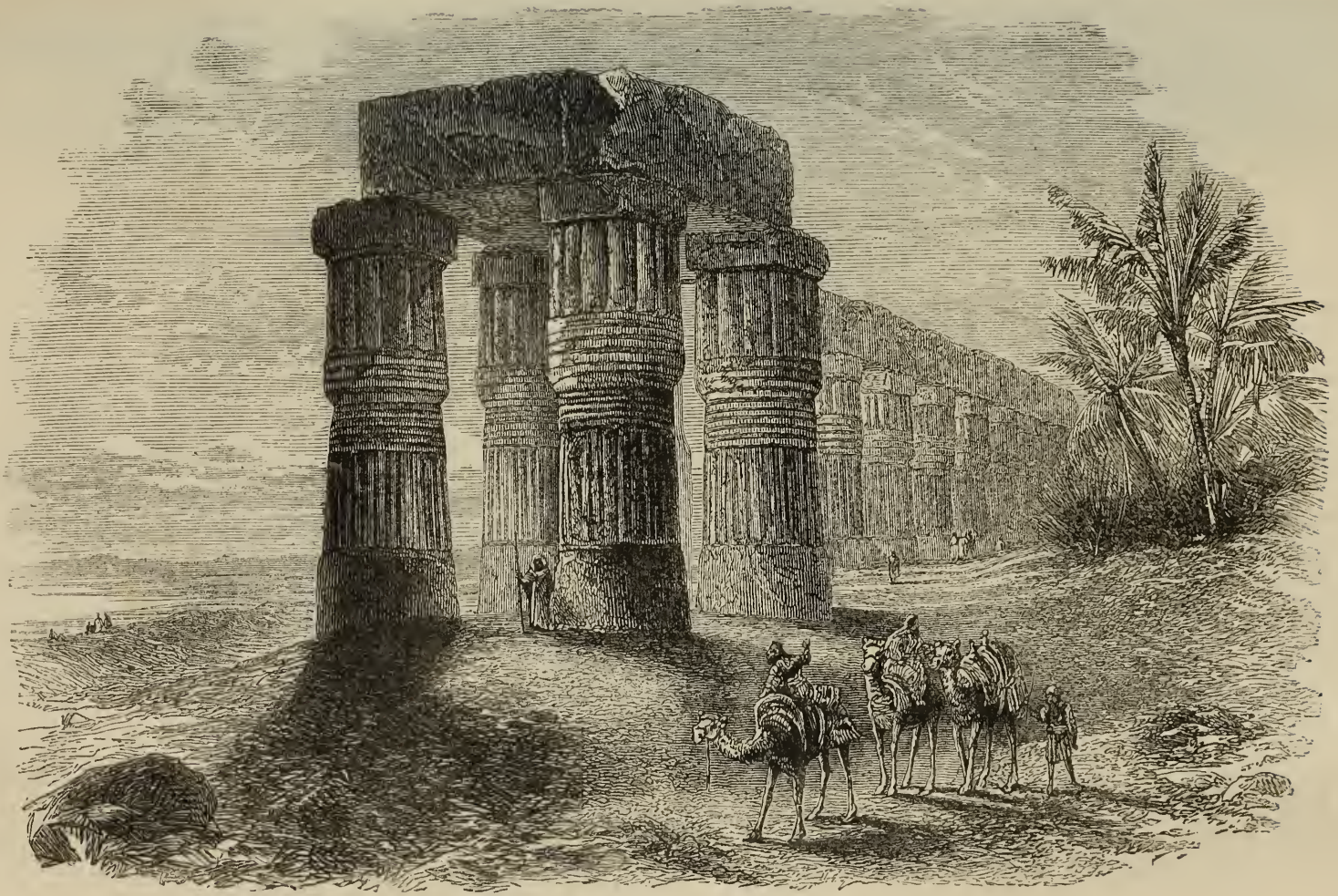
The First Period, then, was the Pagan. Of this the First Epoch was the Ancient Empire : the Early or Primæval Monarchy. It began with Mena or Menes, and ended with the eleventh Dynasty. What was taking place before the reign of Mena will probably remain a matter of conjecture for ever, unless new discoveries should one day throw fresh light upon the subject : a very improbable event in these days of close and lengthened research, when every foot of this ancient and interesting land has been trodden, scrutinised and debated over by hundreds of antiquarian enthusiasts.

Up to the year 1868 very little had been sought and found in the shape of Egyptian antiquities. A few specimens existed in the museums of Berlin, Leyden and Turin, and this was nearly all. During the winter of 1868, however, two French travellers explored the Valley of the Nile, in the hope of discovering ancient remains ; objects of stone or silex, similar to those which distinguish the Stone Age in Europe. The result was the collecting of a large number of tools and implements of silex, found in the whole length of the Nile Valley ; at Gîzeh, Sakkara, Thebes and other places of antiquity.

This aroused attention and interest, and since those days large collections have been found and formed. In October, 1869, other French explorers discovered in the Valley of Kings an immense workshop for the manufacture of tools of silex. This was soon followed by other discoveries of the same nature.

It was difficult to give a date to these implements. The first explorers considered that they belonged to a pre-historic age : a period corresponding with that far-distant time when a mysterious and unknown but evidently civilised race, occupied the whole of Eastern Europe. A similarity of construction led to these conclusions.

This theory was disputed by the Egyptologists, who considered that as silex was frequently employed in the construction of historical tombs and monuments, so these silex tools and implements should be considered as belonging only to the historical period : a theory again combated by geological argument, which left the whole problem in doubt.



ANCIENT TEMPLE AT LUXOR.

Out of all this uncertainty, one thing seemed apparent: that the usage of stone implements continued very late in Egypt, even up to our own times. It remains a problem whether a pre-historic race had not much to do with the manufacture of these implements. And if so, it may be asked whether the Egyptian people began with the Stone Age to lay the foundation, by their own internal strength, for that wonderful degree of civilization to which they had attained in the days of the Pharaohs: or whether the invasion and occupation of a strange people initiated them into a civilization already existing in some other portion of the globe.

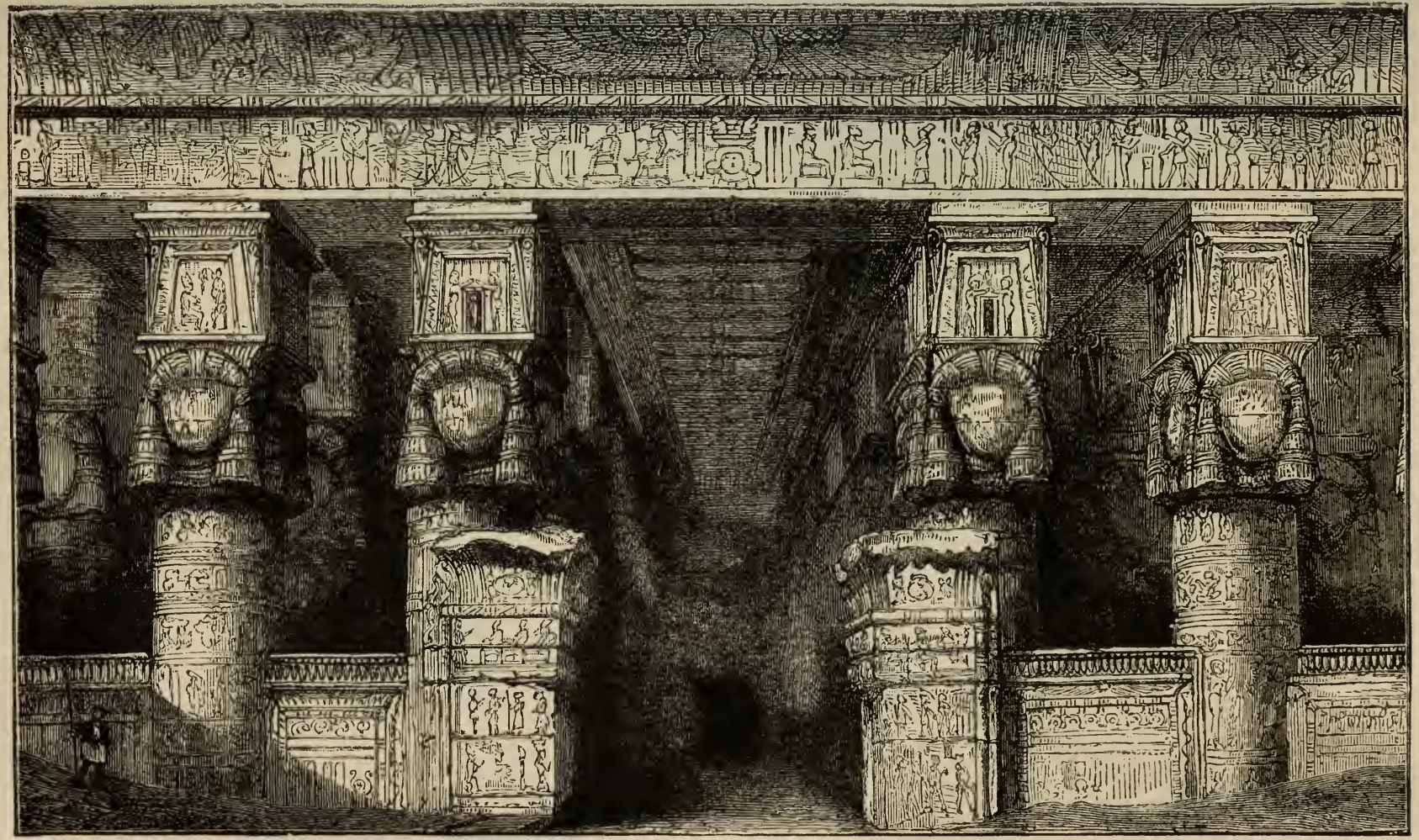
M. Mariette-Bey, the great Egyptologist, is of the latter opinion. He considers that the ancient Egyptians sprang from the primitive race inhabiting the south-west of Asia. These people were called after Koosh or Cush, the brother of Canaan, as mentioned in the Bible: a theory to be met by the objection that the Egyptian race dates to a period far anterior to the Jewish. Mariette-Bey holds to his opinion. He considers that these people immigrated into Egypt, settled themselves in the Valley of the Nile, until then an unknown, uninhabited desert, and that they were already in an advanced state of civilization.

Again, there are naturalists who consider that at the end of the Third Epoch, before the times of the Pharaohs, the Valley of the Nile was covered with a rich vegetation, of which the Petrified Forest of Cairo is a distinct evidence: that, therefore, there is nothing to contradict the supposition that the Valley, then habitable, was occupied by a race anterior to the Asiatic immigration. The character, civilization and language of the Egyptian race are so essentially local and African that they give strong support to this theory.

The first Dynasty was called the Thinite, from This or Thinis, a town whence Mena, the founder of the Egyptian Monarchy, is supposed to have sprung. Thinis was situated in Middle Egypt, near to Abydos, and seems to have been a place of importance and reputation; but no traces of it remain beyond a few fragments of ruins. Mena founded Memphis, on the left bank of the river, and made it his Capital, and its ruins are amongst the most interesting of the great towns of Antiquity.

The third Dynasty was the Memphite.

These three Dynasties lasted during a period of 769 years. Egypt prospered and grew in wealth and importance. Innumerable towns were built on the banks of the Nile, of which to-day we trace the ruins. Companies were formed for working the copper mines in the Sanaitic Peninsula. To-day this Peninsula is inhabited by the Bedaween—the Towárah tribes, numbering about five thousand. They chiefly live by their camels, and subsist upon the date palm. *Min* also forms an article of commerce, and is the traditional manna that fed the children of Israel in the wilderness. It is a gummy substance given out by the tamarisk tree, and drops for two months every



PORTICO OF ANCIENT TEMPLE AT DENDERAH, ON THE WAY TO THEBES.

year, beginning in the autumn. The name is the same as the Hebrew word found in the Bible, and is supposed to have been given to the food by the Israelites, who were at a loss to know of what their miraculous food consisted: "they wist not *what* it was"—*min* or *manna* signifying *what* both in Hebrew and Arabic.

The Towárah tribes of to-day are a quiet and harmless people. Their dress consists of a white shirt with long, open sleeves, fastened at the waist by a girdle, over which is thrown the *Abbayeh*, or long cloak of camel's hair. They also wear the fez or turban, not the Kefeeyeh or striped handkerchief. The women are veiled, and wear a loose blue gown covered with a mantle of the same colour.

The traditions of these people are intimately connected with Moses and the Israelites. They possess a legend of the Passage of the Red Sea as described in the Bible, placing it, however, at Hammam Pharoon, down the Gulf of Suez. The sulphurous hot-baths existing here are supposed to have been caused, according to tradition, by the efforts made by Pharaoh to escape drowning. They have the "Wells of Moses" at Suez and Gebel Moosa; the "Seat of Moses" at Hammam Pharoon, where Moses is said to have watched the Egyptians drowning. On Gebel Moosa there is the outline of a human head, made by Moses when he "shrank back as the glory of the Lord passed by." At Wady Berrah there is a divided rock, which Moses is said to have severed; and in the Wady Feiran is the rock, according to the Bedaween, struck by Moses in his anger. Their biblical traditions are numerous.

The earliest Egyptians had nothing of the negro type about them. They were a white race, with well-formed features and finely-developed heads, but their faces were bronzed by the sun, and their hair was fine and smooth. Altogether, they much resembled the primitive races of Asia, a very different type from the negro population of South Africa. This was long a disputed point, but has now been finally settled by modern explorers.

It seems also certain that civilization began in the north and not in the south of Egypt, ascending, not descending, the Nile; consequently it could not have come from Ethiopia, as was once supposed. Beyond these two points nothing is known of the historical origin and development of the Egyptians. The scanty records take us back, as we have said, only to Menes, the first known king of Egypt and founder of the first Dynasty.

It was during the fourth Dynasty that the three great Pyramids of Gizeh were built: those geometrical tombs which have ever since been the wonder of the world; which proved the Egyptians to be a people of vast numbers, skilled in the art of building, possessing resources and powers which to us of to-day are incomprehensible and almost miraculous.

These Pyramids prove them to have been profoundly learned in the deepest and exactest of human sciences. In due time, the art of

Building gave place to that of Architecture; in place of colossal Pyramids full of geometrical proportions but without grace of outline, arose temples and mosques and tombs, where general effect gave place to charm of detail; but when these have all passed away, the stupendous works of the early kings will still remain to cast their lengthening shadows upon the desert plain as the sun goes down, and bear witness to a time and a people of which it may be that all other trace and record will then have utterly disappeared.

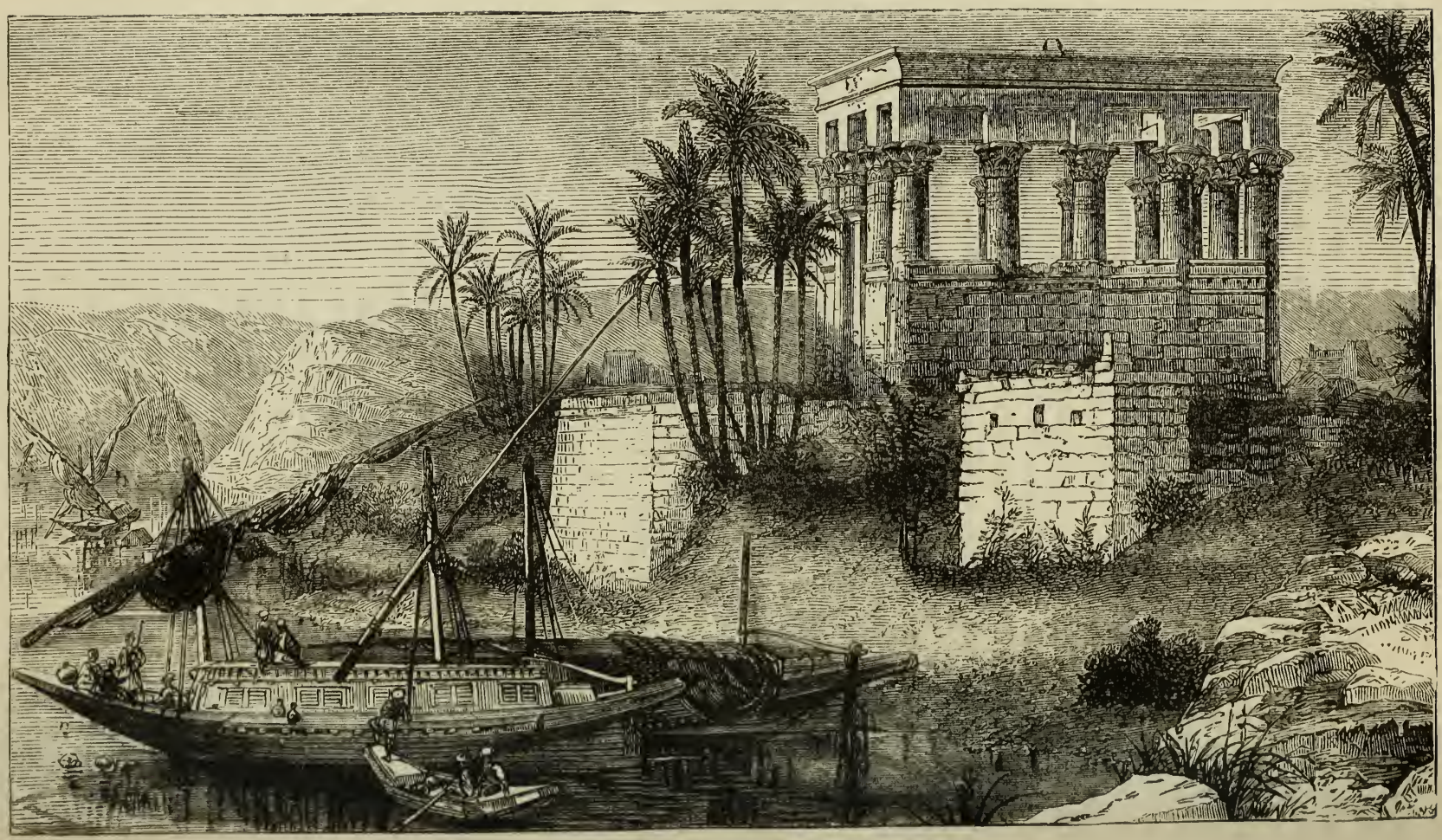
The first Pyramid was built by Khoufou (called Souphis by Manetho and Cheops by Herodotus); the second by Khafra (Chephren in Herodotus); the third by Menkera (Menkheres in Herodotus). In round numbers, therefore, the Pyramids were built about four thousand years before the Christian Era.

This is admitting the reckoning of Manetho to be correct and placing the reign of Menes at five thousand years B.C. This point is so disputed that different historians vary as much as three thousand years in the commencement of the Egyptian monarchy. The earlier date, however, is now more generally received, and seems probably correct. Khafra not only built the second Pyramid, but is supposed to have constructed the magnificent tomb, or temple, at the foot of the Pyramids, upon which the shadow of the Sphinx falls with a sense of mystery that haunts the beholder long after he has turned away from it. He is the first of the Pharaohs whose statues are now existing.

Then, later on, came changes. The Asiatic tribes invaded Egypt. Towards the eighth Dynasty her power began to decline through misrule and self-indulgence, the penalty, too often, of uninterrupted prosperity. Alien tribes cast envious eyes upon this country of corn and wine, and the kings of the ninth Dynasty were "strangers in the land" and reigned in the Delta.

The visit of Abraham is said to have been made to one of these kings; which brings us, as far as we are concerned, to perhaps the most interesting period of all Egyptian history. It is that portion with which we have grown familiar in our childhood; days when, before we had learned the mysteries of the Alphabet, our mothers, with gentle voice and reverent tone, while we stood at their knees and gazed up into their faces with the voiceless awe of childhood, would recount day after day those wonderful Bible stories which combined all the charm of romance, all the rich imagery of the East, with all the force and power of truth and reality and all the influence of things Divine and unseen.

This is one reason why Egypt is so interesting to us all—it has grown familiar to us with our growth. It forms the theme of the first scenes, the first pictures received with all the strength of early impressions and an awakening imagination. What child has not been thrilled by the narrative of Joseph and Mary commencing their midnight journey and taking "the young child down into Egypt?" The very means have seemed so full of the mystery of Divine working—



PHARAOH'S BED ON THE ISLAND OF PHILÆ.

the "being warned of God in a dream." Who has not listened, absorbed, to that vivid succession of scenes commencing with Abraham and going on to Pharaoh and the Passage of the Red Sea? Who has heard unmoved the history of Joseph, with all his troubles and temptations, while the Hand of God was guiding his destiny and bringing him to great honour? Who has not wept at the meeting of the brothers, when Joseph had to withdraw himself to conceal his emotion: wept at one of the most pathetic passages ever recorded—"Is your father yet alive—the old man of whom ye spake?" Not the writer; not, we are persuaded, many a reader. To many of us the mother's gentle voice must for ever ring in our ears: a voice and face that seemed to us only a little lower than the angels'; and so imbued us with a sense of right and wrong, the beauty of holiness, the hideousness of sin, the inevitable results of keeping to the right hand or turning to the left, that no after falling-away of boyhood or manhood could ever fail to arouse in us the still small voice of conscience, bidding us with more power than an iron tongue or a world's voices combined, return to the pure ways of Pleasantness, the safe paths of Peace.

For this reason, then, Egypt has for us all a special and peculiar interest apart from the mere history of the country; for it is to a great extent the scene of the great religious drama which is the foundation stone of all that is lovely and of good report in our present existence; whilst all our sacred lessons, gathered line upon line, precept upon precept, seem entwined with Egyptian recollections not less than with the Holy Land itself.

The visit of Abraham then took place about the eighth or ninth Dynasty. Nothing of very great importance occurred until the end of the eleventh or Theban Dynasty, which put an end to the reign of the Aliens or Heracleopolites.

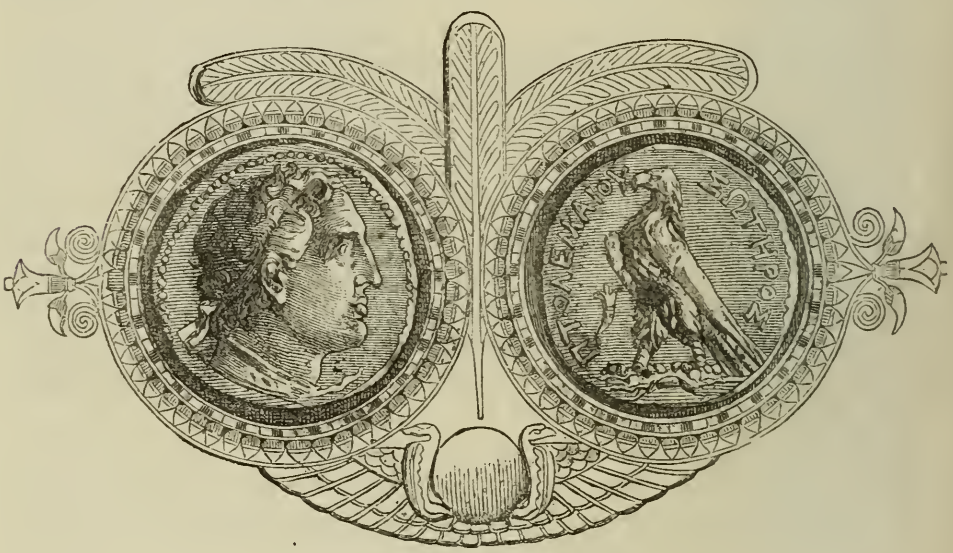
With the twelfth Dynasty the line of the ancient kings was reinstated. Amenemhat was the first of them, and when he came to the throne everything of the ancient monarchy had disappeared.

The new Dynasty was a prosperous one. The kings were wise and brave. Trade increased; wealth was added to the country; the Lower Provinces of Egypt were reconquered. Osirtasen I. left many records of his reign behind him. He restored the old Temple of the Sun, with its worship, built the Temple at Karnak, and laid the foundation of the Fayoom. Art and architecture revived, and some of the finest remains, such as the ruined Colonnade at Karnak and the tombs of Beni Hassan, belong to this date. The art of writing had not yet been lost, and many inscriptions of this reign remain. The poetic muse seems for the first time to have touched mankind with her celestial fire. Much attention was given to irrigation and, under Amenemhat III., accomplished the greatest work of this description the world has ever seen. Amongst other gigantic works he thoroughly irrigated the Fayoom and planned and made

Lake Mœris. The lake with its sacred crocodiles has disappeared, but the Fayoom after four thousand years is still the most fertile province of Egypt: essentially a land flowing with milk and honey, and corn and wine.

The Middle Monarchy began with the twelfth Dynasty and ended with the nineteenth. The twentieth Dynasty ushered in the New Empire and began in the year 1288 B.C.

In this twelfth Dynasty many Semitic families entered Egypt, increasing to very large numbers in the thirteenth Dynasty. It was on such an occasion that Abraham and Sarah visited Upper Egypt—as we find recorded in Genesis, xii. 10: the earliest notice of Egypt to be found in the Bible. They met numerous kinsmen in the seaports of the Delta, allied themselves with them and with the



COIN OF PTOLEMY SOTER.

Arabian tribes, who defeated the Pharaohs and conquered the whole of Lower Egypt. Tanis became their Capital and they ruled Northern Egypt for five centuries under the name of Hyksos. The defeated Pharaohs retired to Upper Egypt. The name Hyksos, according to Josephus and Manetho is taken from *hyk*, a king, and *sos*, a shepherd. These shepherd kings seem to have been of a Phœnician race. They did not put the conquered princes to death, but kept them in strict bondage and dependence.

This Middle Monarchy may be called the Second Period, beginning with Amenemhat, who is supposed to have descended in the female line from the ancient kings. These the Hyksos subdued.

In the seventeenth Dynasty the Capital was placed at Karba, the modern Sân, supposed to be the Zoan mentioned in the Bible. This Karba was built in the fertile plains of the Delta, and judging by the present ruins seems to have been a magnificent town, full of palatial residences built of rare and costly marbles.

It was under one of these kings that Joseph went down into Egypt. The alien kings showed wisdom and adaptation in keeping up the manners and customs already established there. The religion, the arts, the language and the writing of the country they adopted; nothing was changed. The descendants of the ancient Egyptians became their servitors. At one period a great famine spread death and desolation over the whole land—probably the famine spoken of in the Bible, in which Joseph took so prominent a part. According to Dr. Brugsch, Joseph went down into Egypt in the year B.C. 1730, during the reign of the Pharaoh Nubti.

The decline of the middle period was distinguished by great kings and mighty deeds.

COIN OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT.

Meneptah I. carried his victorious army far into Asia. He was one of the most lavish and magnificent of all the monarchs. Amongst other great works, he made the first canal between the Red Sea and the Nile; beginning that long series of enterprises stretching down from the year 1385 B.C. to our own times, and terminating with the great Suez Canal. His tomb at Thebes is the most remarkable of all the tombs of the kings; and at Karnak, Koorneh and Abydos many monuments testify to the splendour of his reign.

Next came Rameses the Great, the legendary Sesostris of the Greek historians, who reigned for sixty-seven years.

Of his conquests there seems to have been no end. His magnificence was also unparalleled; he was sumptuous in all his ideas, and at the same time large-minded and valiant. A great conqueror, he added to

the prosperity, if not the peace and repose, of Egypt. Many ruins now existing are the remains of palaces and temples built during his reign. His energy was so great that he seemed compelled to seek every possible occasion and outlet for its prosecution. Many memorials of his deeds and victories exist. Almost every great monument of Egypt records his name. He extended his victories south to Donkola, north to Asia Minor, east to the Tigris, and erected monuments in all the conquered countries. He was a great patron of all the arts and sciences, erected the Ramesseum at Thebes and presented it with a library. Poetry flourished during his reign. Yet his heart must have been hard, for it was he who oppressed the Israelites. For long he was considered the greatest conqueror, the most illustrious monarch of ancient Egypt. It is now supposed that his conquests were exaggerated; that a portion of the victories and glories for which he has obtained sole credit were due to Thothmes III., his predecessor, and Meneptah II. and Rameses III., his immediate successors. It is said that he caused many of the crests or bearings of his predecessors to be effaced upon the various monuments, and substituted for them his own. He appears to have had great difficulty in maintaining the integrity of his empire during his long reign.

The chief feature of interest in the reign of his successor, Meneptah II., was the Exodus of the Children of Israel.

How vividly the scene comes before us. The black darkness of the night, relieved only by the silent stars above, pledges of the Eternal Wisdom who calleth them all by their names and guideth all things earthly. A great concourse of people, dressed for a long journey, with staff in hand and head covered. The mystery attending the unknown future, the plunge into a desert waste, hitherto untrodden by their feet. The sadness of leaving familiar spots and scenes behind them, beloved in spite of their grievous bondage. The spoiling of the Egyptians, subdued and terrified by the plagues which had only hardened the heart of Pharaoh. The first moments of that wonderful Exodus, under the earthly guidance of Moses, the Heavenly direction of the Pillar of Fire; followed by that record without parallel, the forty years' wandering in the wilderness.

It was during the reign of Meneptah II. that the termination of a Sothis period was celebrated. Sothis was their name for Sirius, or the Dog Star, and his course in the heavens was their guidance in fixing the exact astronomical year. The Egyptians, as we know, were great astronomers. They seem, indeed, to have been great in all abstruse sciences, for what can be more wonderful than the precision, the astounding mathematical calculations employed in building the Pyramids?

They had their "wise men" also, in those days, whether they came from Egypt or from some neighbouring country; for we are told that wise men came to worship the Infant Saviour and to present Him

their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, "having seen His star in the East."

These wise men must have been soothsayers or astrologers, and this passing mention of them in the Bible seems to give countenance to their profession, and to prove yet once more that there are more things in Heaven and earth than we dream of in our philosophy.

ON THE NILE.

In this our own day we laugh to scorn the science of the stars; alchemy, magic, necromancy, all the occult sciences, we hold as the work of imposture; and perhaps very properly so. But the "wise men" of those days were evidently not impostors. If their imagination occasionally carried them further than their revelation, there was undoubtedly a large substratum of truth in what they said and did. "Where is He that is born King of the Jews, for we have seen His star in the East and are come to worship Him?" This knowledge they evidently gained from their science; it was not a direct message from Heaven. No angels appeared to the wise men as they did to the simple shepherds watching their flocks by night. And what a vision must that have been to those quiet watchers! What celestial harmonies must have gone ringing through the spheres, perhaps are echoing still in the far-off spaces that have neither circumference nor centre. "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill towards men!" a message that may well echo and re-echo through the everlasting realms until time shall be no more and the glory of the First Advent shall be swallowed up in the fulfilment of the Second.

The wise men were not simple shepherds and no angel was needed to announce the consummation of the great mystery upon which all our future hopes depend: the fact that God had become reconciled to man. The knowledge came to them through their dark science; possibly they had foreseen it for years, waited for it for years, and at last must have read with strange emotion what they had so long anticipated. That they recognised the stupendous and eternal consequences of the event seems undoubted from their gifts and worship; and this again would almost seem to suggest something of revelation with their scientific or astrological labours.

Nor is this to be wondered at. In those days they were nearer to the eternal and the unseen than we are in these. The Almighty had not then, as now, completely withdrawn all manifestations of Himself and His Presence. We have to walk solely by faith, but sight was also accorded to the ancients. As we have more internal evidence, so they needed more external. The Holy Spirit had not been sent forth upon the earth "to bear witness with our spirit;" we have "the evidence in ourselves;" they had not. The Messiah had not yet come; they were still aliens, living only in hope of that promise which to us has been fulfilled and has borne its fruit for nearly two thousand years. Those were the days of mighty manifestations; of lightnings and thunderings; of tremblings of the earth that were not earthquakes; of furious winds; of prophecyings and miracles; of wars when the LORD OF HOSTS went forth with the armies, and they were victorious because His Presence went with them. Yet His voice was not heard in all these mighty manifestations. He spoke to Moses then as he speaks individually to mankind now: in the "still, small voice;" audible to Moses, but to us only heard as the voice of Conscience.

And it is, we repeat once more, because Egypt has been the scene of so many of these events which will leave their mark upon time and upon eternity, that it is to us so supremely interesting a country; surrounded by a sacred halo which has shed its light abroad upon all mankind; so that, paradoxical as it may seem, from this most superstitious of lands has come forth a radiance that has done much to dissipate the superstition of the world.

It was at the close of the Second Period that one of the great tragedies was taking place which gave rise to so many symbols of the great plan of Redemption: such as the Eating of the Passover, the lifting up of the serpent in the wilderness, and much more. Rameses II. oppressed the Israelites until their lives became a burden to themselves. He bid them make bricks without straw; he employed them in building many of his great monuments; in every possible way he tyrannised over them. But he died, and Meneptah, another King arose in his stead, and yet more hardened his heart against the Children of Israel. To him and his land came the Ten Plagues of Egypt; to him Moses said, "Thou shalt see my face no more." Immediately after which came the Exodus.

The Sothis, or Dog-Star, to which we have alluded (the most beautiful star in the heavens then, as now), by his course gave the Egyptians their means of reckoning the true astronomical year. Their first year began with the early rising of the star, at the beginning of the overflowing of the Nile. But with them, as in our own calculation, the Egyptian solar year was six hours shorter than the Sothis or astronomical year. Thus they soon got out of their reckoning. At the end of forty years the solar year fell short of the Sothis year by ten days, the difference widening as the years went on, displacing the dates of their great festivals, which fell at periods to which they did not belong. After fourteen hundred and sixty years the error corrected itself, and the new year corresponded with the rising of the Sothis. We have leap year to balance our own calculations.

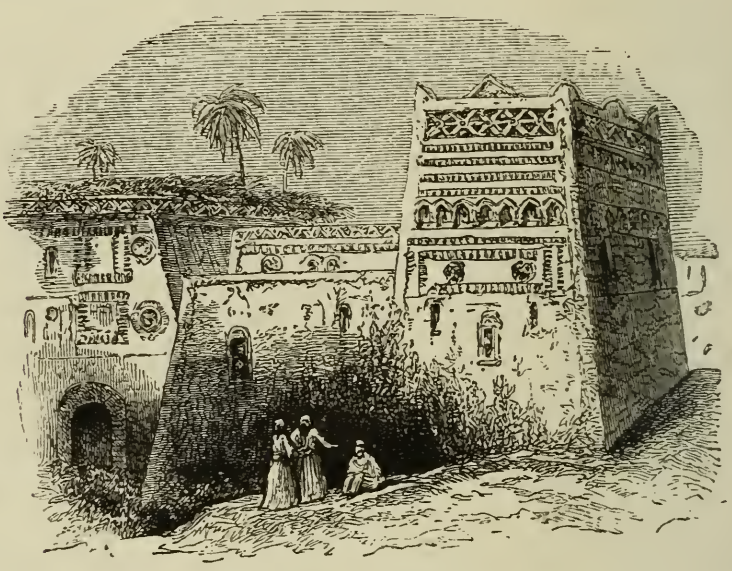
The Third Period dates from about the year 1700 to 1000 B.C.

It appears to have begun with Amosis, the first king of the eighteenth Dynasty. Amosis drove the Hyksos out of Egypt, and he and his successors were called the Deliverers. Many of the finest monuments existing were due to them, and art and science flourished under their rule. The wonderful collection of jewels in the Boulak Museum at Cairo belonged to Aah-hotep, the queen who immediately preceded Amosis. Amongst the monuments erected by the Deliverers are, the Temple of Hatasoo; the obelisk in the Temple of Karnak, the highest in the world, raised by Dayr-el-Bahree to the memory of her father, Thothmes I.; the quarries at Silsilis; the rock tombs in the Theban Mountains; part of the Temple of Karnak; the gigantic figures of Amenhotep III. in the Plain of Thebes, which stand out against the background of sky like mighty and mysterious creations, as the sun sinks westward and the almost momentary twilight spreads its mantle over the earth. It was an age of poetry, too, and a hymn on granite, now in the Boulak Museum, reminds one of the lofty strains of the Song of Moses, which was not written for three hundred years later. This similarity might almost suggest that the Hebrews, who gained much from the Egyptians, may possibly have been influenced by them in the style of their verse.

Egypt at this period reached its highest point of prosperity. All the countries bordering the Mediterranean belonged to them; at no time were more magnificent buildings erected, and one of the obelisks belonging to this period is now in London.

As we have seen, the reigns of Rameses I. and Sethi I. were much occupied in repressing an Asiatic invasion. Under Rameses II. came the bondage of the Israelites. Under Meneptah came the Exodus; and his tomb may be seen at Bab-el-Molook. Under the kings reigning between Rameses II. and Rameses III. the country declined, but the latter restored it to its former glory. The history of his reign is recorded in the Harris papyrus now in the British Museum. This long line of monarchs terminated with Rameses XVI., after which came a series of revolutions.

Then came more changes in the country. New dynasties arose, commencing with the Tanite, founded by a high priest of the god Amen. The Assyrians put an end to it, and gave rise to the Bubastite Dynasty. Shashank I. captured and pillaged Jerusalem. He is mentioned in the Bible as Shishak, and we find the record in the 1st Kings, chap. 14 : and the 2 Chron., chap. 12. Soon after this came the Ethiopians, who had been gradually making way in the South of Egypt as the Assyrians in the North. They continued for a time, but Egypt was again invaded by the Assyrians under Esar-haddon, who finally triumphed and conquered Egypt after many repulses. He divided the country into twelve provinces, appointing a governor to each province, by one of whom the Saite or next dynasty was founded.



SHEIKH'S HOUSE.

The Greeks now settled in Egypt for the first time. During this dynasty Zedekiah was besieged in Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. Nahbra, the Egyptian, went to Zedekiah's assistance, but afterwards sided with the Babylonians, who put an end to the kingdom of Judæa.

The most splendid reign of this dynasty was that of Aahmes, who restored to Egypt some of her ancient splendour. The Persian Empire was founded by Cyrus, whose son Cambyses invaded Egypt, was successful at the Battle of Pelusium, and subdued the country.

From this moment some of the charms of antiquity, much of the halo and glamour, the romance and mystery surrounding the pure Egyptians, disappear. Five centuries still have to rise and set before the Christian Era; but Egypt seems to be in touch with the newer world when, under Cambyses, it becomes a province of the Persian Empire.

True it was only exchanging one form of romance for another, or, rather, adding romance to romance, for Persia has been ever associated with everything that is magnificent and gorgeous. A land of fervid imagination, the pride of wealth, the pomp of luxury, everything that is glowing and picturesque; a land of roses and rich wines and sumptuous feasts: a land which went forth conquering and to conquer, subduing kingdoms, annexing provinces and turning its own small empire into a mighty power. A land full of poetry and rich imagery, yielding the palm only to the yet more imaginative Arabians. Such was Persia.

So with the conquest of Egypt by Persia, the Lotus Land seems to approach a very sensible step nearer to our own times; we appear to realise her more, are more in touch with her. The feeling may be partly the effect of fancy and imagination, but it is no less real in its influence.

The Persians began the Fourth Period and the twenty-seventh Dynasty. Amyrtæus was sole king of the twenty-eighth Dynasty, and in his reign Herodotus, the father of historians, to whom we owe so much that is now known, visited Egypt. In one of the succeeding reigns Plato also visited Egypt as an oil-merchant. Then came Alexander the Great, who gave the final blow to the Egyptian independence.

Nekho, one of the kings of the twenty-sixth Dynasty, was a domestic king. In his day the extremity of South Africa was first navigated, and he began to construct a canal from the Nile to the Red Sea, but did not finish the work because an oracle declared that it would only benefit strangers. He marched in his time against Assyria and defeated Josiah, King of Judah, at Megiddo. At this period Ninevah fell, Assyria was divided, Nekho was defeated by Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, at Karkemish and had to give up his possessions in Syria and Palestine. Nebuchadnezzar besieged and took Jerusalem. Then arose Belshazzar, King of Babylon, who gave himself up to luxury and pleasure, until, at a great feast, he was suddenly startled by the Handwriting upon the wall, of which Daniel became the interpreter. In that night his kingdom was taken from him by Cyrus, founder of the Persian Empire. After the capture of Babylon and Lydia, Egypt became sole rival of the new and great Persian Empire, and when she was annexed to Persia by the victories of Cambyses, Persia practically ruled the world.

The Persian dominion began with the twenty-eighth Dynasty, and lasted with greater or less interruption, until Darius III. was conquered by Alexander the Great. The Egyptians hailed Alexander as their deliverer from the yoke of the Persians, which they had ever looked upon as bondage of the hardest description during the whole two hundred years that it lasted. Alexander did much for Egypt, his greatest domestic act being the founding of Alexandria, which became

the great centre and representative of Greek learning, and the key-stone to the commerce of the whole world.

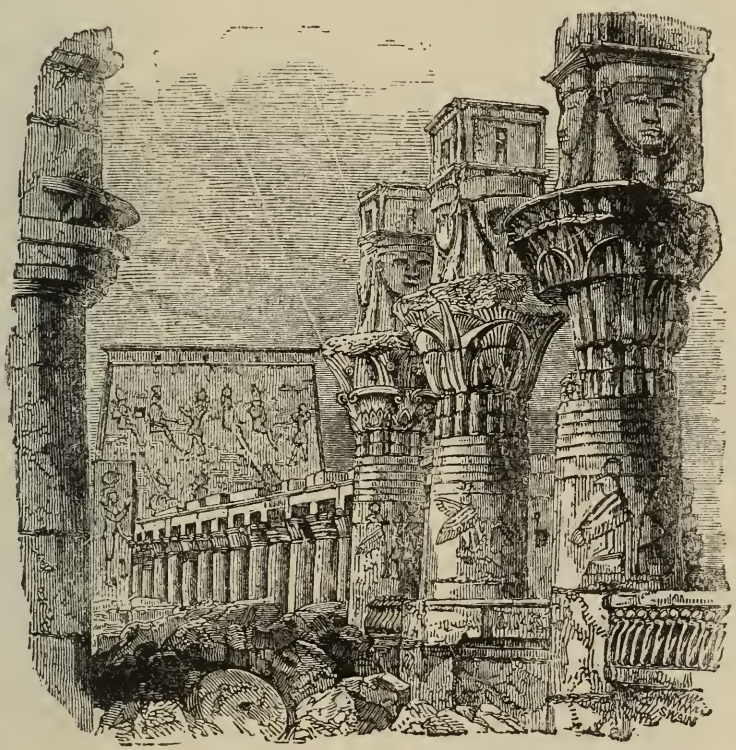
Upon the death of Alexander rose the Period of the Ptolemies. They began their reign with everything in their favour: wealth, commerce, possessions, all were theirs. The Alexandrian museum was founded for the benefit of learned men and for the reception of literary treasures. Athens had hitherto been the recognised seat of learning and culture; now this honour fell to Alexandria. The museum contained an immense library, of which the commencement had been a small collection left by Aristotle. This rose, in the time of Ptolemy Philadephus, to four hundred thousand volumes; and in the time of Cæsar, when it was burned, to nine hundred thousand.

The Serapeum was also built under the Ptolemies, and stood near Pompey's Pillar. This was the great temple of Serapis, a god introduced by the Ptolemies, who wished the Greeks and Egyptians to possess a deity they might worship in common. The Greeks called him Pluto, the Egyptians Osiris-Apis; and they looked upon him as the god of the infernal regions. By the Egyptians he was transformed into a new divinity, with rites to suit their own form of worship. The Apis bull, down to a very late period, was chiefly worshipped at Memphis.

The Serapeum, when finished, was only surpassed in grandeur and magnificence by the Roman Capitol. It stood at the west end of Alexandria, near the Necropolis, and was approached on one side by a lofty flight of steps, leading to a platform and a vaulted roof supported by four columns. The Colonnades contained different chambers set apart for the worship of Apis; and, at one period, a library of three hundred thousand volumes. The walls of the Colonnades were gorgeously painted, the ceiling and capitals were gilded. The whole effect was one of dazzling splendour. The god Apis had been brought by Ptolemy Soter, from Sinope on the Pontus, the Sinopeons at first refusing to part with it. After three years the image is said to have transported itself on board a vessel, and to have miraculously arrived at Alexandria in three days. This wooden image, overlaid with precious metals, was placed within the sanctuary of the temple, an opening in the roof causing rays of sunlight to fall upon the mouth of the image: an effect adopted in the present day in some of the Roman Catholic churches abroad. Most of the images of Apis are of dark stone. It has been said that that of Alexandria was of emerald. Cerberus lay at its feet, with the heads of a wolf, a lion and a dog, entwined with a serpent—emblems of sagacity, strength, watchfulness and wisdom.

The Ptolemies found Egypt in the full flow of prosperity; but as time went on, the kings degenerated; many of them were cruel and self-indulgent, and the country suffered. At length, fifty-two years before the Christian Era, arose the Great Cleopatra (though we cannot say Cleopatra the Great), seventh of her name. She was

the daughter of Auletes, the "flute-player," who had been established upon the throne by the Roman power. He left his eldest children, Cleopatra and Dionysus, joint heirs; but very soon Dionysus, afraid of Cleopatra, banished her from the kingdom. Pompey being defeated by Cæsar at the battle of Pharsalia, fled to Egypt, hoping to find refuge with Dionysus, of whom he was guardian. As soon as he landed, the latter caused him to be put to death. Then Cæsar invaded Alexandria on behalf of Cleopatra, and defeated Ptolemy, who was drowned in the Nile. Cæsar appointed Cleopatra's next brother to reign with her, but she, perhaps afraid of a second banishment, caused him to be put to death; after which Cæsar himself was



ANCIENT TEMPLE OF ISIS.

murdered. Then came the summons to Cleopatra from Antony to repair to Tarsus and answer for her misdeeds. Antony, we know, fell a victim to her charms, after which came nine years of such magnificent self-indulgence as the world had never seen before, has never seen since, ending in sad and disastrous suicide for the unhapy pair.

Upon this the Greek element disappeared from Egypt, and the country became a Roman province. The Roman power existed four hundred and twenty-six years, beginning with Augustus and ending with Theodosius the Great.

In the reign of Tiberius, when all the world was at peace and the Temple of Janus was closed, came the fulfilment of the long-looked-for prophecy—the birth of the Saviour.

Henceforth all was changed; a new religious era had set in, which was to alter the face of the globe, the character of mankind. Yet it was to bring, not peace, but a sword upon the earth for many a generation, many a century.

In the year A.D. 55, in the reign of Nero, Christianity is said to have been introduced into Egypt by St. Mark, twenty-two years after he had witnessed the death and resurrection and ascension of our Lord in Jerusalem. Henceforth the Christians were to be persecuted for their faith, and the great army of Christian Martyrs commenced. In the year 323 Constantine the Great summoned the Council of Nice, where the doctrines of Christianity were confirmed, and the Nicene Creed was compiled, with the help of Athanasius, a deacon of Alexandria. Constantine was himself a Christian, and freed all the Christians from oppression and persecution. The blood of the martyrs ceased to flow, and for a time there was a great religious calm. In the year 379 Theodosius I. went further than Constantine, and proclaimed Christianity as the religion of the empire, making all else unlawful. From that time all were to be Christians; Paganism was to be abolished. The Serapeum at Alexandria was destroyed, together with every smaller heathen temple, every image of wood and stone: and their name was legion. Not only in Alexandria, but in every town of Egypt was the work of destruction carried on; in every house, in the open fields, on the banks of the Nile, and even in the desert plains, every symbol of idolatry was commanded to be destroyed.

From this period dates also the downfall of Egyptian science: as if this had been so mixed up with idolatry and superstition that the birth of a more wholesome era was its own death-blow. The secret of their writings, the key to the hieroglyphics and inscriptions were finally lost, and for fourteen hundred years remained buried in the most profound mystery and obscurity; until the discovery of the Rosetta Stone, and the researches and labours of Champollion, the great French Egyptologist, once more brought to light the secret which had baffled all previous scientific research.

The Christian period lasted for two hundred and forty-three years, when Egypt fell under the Arabian conquerors and embraced their religion.

In the year 640 began the Mohammedan period under the Caliphs. Egypt soon became the headquarters of Islam. This was the Sixth Period in the history of Egypt and lasted from 640 to 1517. Immense social, political and religious changes took place. On the one hand much that was erroneous and to be deplored spread over the length and breadth of the land; on the other hand, a great deal that was good and lasting was effected. Multitudes of the people accepted the new faith, which possessed many elements that appealed to their lower natures and was less self-sacrificing and self-denying than the pure religion of Christ. The Christians who remained true

to their creed were called Copts, as they are to this day. Very soon they became subject to persecutions, which continued for many centuries.

The Arabian dominion in Egypt created a revolution in many things. Fanaticism was the leading trait of the Mohammedans, as it ever is in all whose religion is founded upon error, idolatry, or superstition. From the lips of only ONE Regenerator have we received the Divine assurance: I WILL HAVE MERCY AND NOT SACRIFICE.

The Mohammedans brought their fanaticism to bear upon everything they did. When their rule was over they had left their indelible mark upon the country. They extended the arts and sciences, bringing to the former an immense amount of gorgeous and elaborate detail and a great degree of refinement. They had carried the art of metallic engraving, of damascened and inlaid work, to perfection; their pottery was famous for its wonderful glazes, their stained glass for the brilliancy of its colours, their embroideries for the fineness of their work and material. Their vivid imaginations delighted in everything that was gorgeous in colouring, yet vulgarism was unknown. It was their pleasure to live in a rainbow atmosphere, but so harmonious that colour blended with colour and the result was an enchanting effect. Their architecture was florid and ornate, appealing to the senses. The pointed arch came into use; sculpture, for which the Egyptians had been so famous, disappeared, but in minute carving they were pre-eminent. They had an unfailing capacity alike for broad outline and elaborate detail.

Under the Caliphs civilisation made great progress, yet was contradictory: refinement was mixed with barbarism, learning with intolerance and oppression.

It was an age of poetry, romance and music, toned and kept under by a love of pomp, magnificence and self-indulgence. Then, as now, they were distinguished by dignity of bearing, an effect partly due to their flowing garments, partly to an innate grandeur of mind. It was the age of mosques and minarets; an age which left the Tombs of the Caliphs as a legacy to the world: magnificent monuments that give so distinctive a character to this Lotus Land, but that seem, like so much else, to be falling into ruin and decay. All that is charming to the eye and enchanting to the imagination is fast disappearing from Egypt; and as the banks of the Nile are crowded with the ruins of "gorgeous palaces and cloud-capp'd towers," that existed for long ages before the dawn of Christianity, so it is much to be feared will the interest surrounding Cairo one day be of this mournful character. Many a Caliph's tomb, many a mosque and minaret will be known only as a tradition of the past.

To the Mohammedan succeeded the Turkish rule in Egypt, in the sixteenth century. It was productive of no great change, of no important event. This was the Seventh Period.

In the Turkish element we come upon an influence that has rarely

been great or wholesome. In the lands over which they have ruled they have seldom left traces for good or any lasting impression. Turkey itself would long since have disappeared but for strong allies who have kept her from the enemy. When Turkey went to war with Russia in 1771, Ali Bey, an Arab prince, took possession of Egypt, but in 1798 Napoleon invaded Egypt, defeated the Mamelukes near the Pyramids and took possession of Cairo. Nelson next fought the Battle of the Nile, and destroyed the French fleet, and Napoleon fled back to France. In 1801 Abercromby fought and won the battle of Alexandria. In 1811 the power of Mohammed Ali was finally established by the murder of Mameluke Beys to the number of four hundred and seventy in the Citadel of Cairo.

If Mohammed Ali was unscrupulous, he was also brave, daring and determined; he possessed great tact and wisdom, the power of governing, the ability to command and to make himself obeyed. He had the welfare of Egypt at heart, and was hailed by the Egyptians as another deliverer. He made great alterations, established great reforms. Under his rule the country grew in wealth and prosperity. In 1831, hoping to gain the complete independence of Egypt, he declared war against Turkey, and would probably have succeeded—for he was born under a propitious star—had not the European powers gone against him. In 1841, the viceroyalty was made hereditary in his family. Mohammed Tewfik, who has just died, was the great grandson of Mohammed Ali. In 1866, the title of Khedive was given to the viceroys, Ismail Pasha being the first to bear it.

At the present moment, Egypt is not in a very flourishing condition. Her past magnificence and expenditure have brought her into a state of partial bankruptcy. She has had to borrow from other countries, and has not always met her liabilities. From all this she will probably one day arise and shake herself free. If Wisdom becomes her watchword, she possesses sufficient internal resources to take her place once more, in the course of time, amongst the important and respected nations of the world. Let her see to it, for it chiefly depends upon herself. For the present, perhaps happily, she is not quite free to do as she pleases. The English occupation of Egypt leaves her very much in the condition of a subdued power; but let England also see that she uses her influence well and controls her acts with discretion. The race is to the swift and the battle to the strong, only when wisdom waits upon the footsteps of power. Only when the LORD OF HOSTS went forth with the armies of Israel were they victorious: and in these days, however much men may slight the lessons that have come down to us from the Past, none will escape shipwreck who trust to their own strength and lightly esteem the Divine ordering of the universe.

FOR FATHER'S SAKE.

By Lady Dunboyne.

"SO that is Colonel Ainslie—the hero of whom we have heard and read so much!" said one of the elder ladies who were looking on at a tennis match in the Rectory grounds at West Moor. "Well! I had expected to think him plain, but scarcely so—so almost repulsively ugly as he really is. Not even a good figure to redeem that frightful face—surely one eye is nearly closed just above the scar?"

"Ah!" said the Rector with his quiet smile, "the comrade whom he saved from the Zulu assegais has had good cause to bless that scar. Poor old Jack Ainslie had a near shave for it that time, and the Victoria Cross, even, is a poor exchange for half one's sight. He is one of the finest fellows that ever lived, and I defy even you, Mrs. Russell, to think him ugly after he has talked to you for five minutes in that pleasant voice of his, the only attraction he ever possessed."

"What brings him to West Moor?"

"Partly the fact of his being a distant cousin of my wife's—no, you need not apologise for your criticism; we all know Jack's personal shortcomings, and no one is better aware of them than himself—and partly his wish to look up an old friend and brother officer to whom he was formerly much attached—Captain Wingfield."

"The father of pretty little Madge? I see her over yonder, playing tennis with Charlie Fullerton as usual. I hope there is nothing in *that;* it would be too silly, when neither has a penny."

"Oh! they are only old chums and playfellows; boys never fall in love with the little tots they have known from babyhood."

"I am not quite sure of that, when the tots grow up so distractingly pretty, with yellow-gold hair and forget-me-not coloured eyes—really Madge has a face that would drive an artist distracted—but after all I believe her safety lies in the fact of thinking no one equal to her father. I don't know Captain Wingfield myself, but I like to ask the child after him, for the sake of seeing her sweet little face light up. But you look grave; is he not so well?"

"I fear there is sore trouble in store for Madge's tender little heart," said the Rector evasively, and the next minute he made his escape to where his friend and guest was standing with folded arms, quietly watching the gay scene.

"Much bored, Ainslie? Don't stand on ceremony; go off and have a quiet pipe whenever you get tired of our frivolities."

"Thanks, old fellow, but I am doing very well. I've been away from civilised society so long, what with India and that shooting trip to the Rockies since I gave up the service, that it rather amuses me

to take up the threads again. By-the-bye, Everett, I think I have discovered the young lady whom you promised to show me to-day. At least she is a striking likeness of my dear old handsome chum, Val Wingfield." He pointed out a lady of some five-and-twenty years, or possibly more, tall and slender, with a certain quiet stateliness in her very plain dress and thick plaits of golden-brown hair. "She has Val's profile exactly and, when she speaks, his very expression—and yet I am puzzled——"

"I should think so!" laughed the Rector. "Where has your memory gone wool-gathering, Ainsley? That is Christine Wingfield, niece to your old friend, and only down in these parts for a short visit. Little Madge is seven years younger than her cousin, as you ought to know, for you were her godfather (though represented by proxy) when christened her eighteen years ago. That is she, whose splendid serving they are applauding over yonder—our queen of the tennis ground, especially when she has Charley Fullerton as partner. Poor little girl! I fear her days of gaiety are numbered! If all one hears be true, poor Wingfield will not be able to keep on his place much longer."

"Why so?"

"He has had heavy losses. He never was a prudent man, and since his wife's death things have just been allowed to slide. One or two speculations into which he was drawn have turned out badly, and yesterday I heard to my great dismay that the —— Bank, in which most of we —— shire folks are interested, is very shaky. I have only a few hundreds in it, but poor Wingfield is a large shareholder. Should it fail, there will be very little but ruin before him and poor little Madge. Christine has barely enough to live on herself—she boards with some old friends in town, and spends her time in writing for the magazines, laying out her earnings in charity. I have no doubt that whenever the crash does come, the good girl will devote herself to doing all she can—more than she can, indeed—to spare her uncle and the little one. The two girls are very tenderly attached."

It seemed so, indeed, for the tennis match ended at this moment, and Madge, bright and flushed with victory, ran up to her cousin, whose grave sweet face lighted up with smiles of response.

The Rector crossed over to them. "Madge, I have brought you an old friend—one of whom you have heard your father speak—Colonel Ainslie. Christine, I think you, too, must have heard of him, in his public character at all events."

Both girls turned, but Christine's quiet greeting was lost in the younger one's eager cry of welcome. "Oh, how glad my father will be! he has talked of you so often, and wondered if he would ever see you again! Ah! we know you well—have known you for years, dear godfather! have we not Chrissie?" turning in her child-like, impulsive way to her cousin, whose assent was signified only by a smile.

"And now tell me of him—tell me of my dear old friend," said Colonel Ainslie, a few minutes later, when, Christine having slipped away on some pretext, he paced the shady, rose-bordered walks along with Madge. "I have so much to hear, for it is long, long since we shook each other by the hand, vowing that neither time nor space should ever break the brother-like tie between us. Ah, child you don't know what your father was to me, when I joined the old regiment, a raw subaltern, twenty seven years ago. Shy, ugly, awkward and homesick, you can scarcely imagine a more miserable specimen of humanity. And then *he* took me up—Val Wingfield—the most popular youngster of them all, the handsomest, the most sought after. There were only a few years between us, and I always looked older than I was. The fellows nick-named us Valentine and Orson, and we were like brothers until that day—a sad one to me—when your father gave up soldiering to marry. We have never met since, for I was constantly away on foreign service; latterly in various posts of command; and on the only occasion of my spending any time in England your father was travelling in the Riviera on account of your mother's health. Since I returned this time, I have heard that you have lost her; nay, my child, I did not mean to distress you; it is like my old bearish clumsiness."

"No, no," said Madge, struggling to speak calmly, "it is not that; not your fault in any way; only I was thinking of father—oh! how glad he will be to see you! Dear, dear father! but he is very ill, so much changed even in the last few years, and perhaps *you* will hardly know him. He has had troubles," her voice faltered again, and Ainslie pressed the little hand that rested confidingly within his arm.

"And when may I come?" he asked. "My time here may be short. I have the offer of an appointment at the Horse-guards, and may have to go up to London soon."

"Oh come to-night!" cried Madge; then hesitating: "that is, if you will not mind. The house is not so very small, but we have only a part of it furnished now," she broke off, hearing Christine's quiet voice at her elbow. "Madge dear, I am going home with Mrs. Russell, she wants me to stay a few days, and will send over for my things. Will you not take Colonel Ainslie back with you to see Uncle Val? And my room will be all ready," she added in a lower voice.

That evening, long after Madge had gone to her room, the two old brother officers sat smoking in Captain Wingfield's snuggery, striving with more or less success to bridge over with friendly recollections the long gulf of years, during which they had been parted.

They were a strange contrast—Valentine Wingfield with his delicate, handsome features—sharpened yet more by ill-health and the seclusion of his recent life—scholar and scientist now, rather than soldier, and feeling himself on unfamiliar ground as he talked the long-forgotten language of the past—and Jack Ainslie, sturdy, bronzed,

weather-beaten, almost repulsively ugly, as Mrs. Russell had said, ungainly in figure, yet withal a soldier every inch of him, with the ring of command in his frank, kindly voice, and a certain air of distinction and self-reliance common to those who have had the lives and safety of other human creatures in their keeping. Sadly now he was looking at the wreck before him of all he had once thought brightest and noblest in manhood—at Val Wingfield, as he sat leaning back in his chair and speaking of the ruin which seemed about to overwhelm him and his child.

"If I could have died here in peace and seen Madge provided for, I should be content," was the hopeless, oft-repeated burden of his song; and with vain efforts to cheer him and infuse a little hopefulness into the broken-down spirit, Ainsley at length left him for the night.

For himself sleep seemed impossible; he tossed about hopelessly till early dawn, and then rose in accordance with his Indian habits, and went out to soothe and cool his brain in the garden, all beautiful and fragrant in the dewy freshness of a June morning. He strolled about till eight o'clock, when he saw the postman come and go with little interest, knowing that his own letters, if any, would be left at the Rectory.

Presently, however, an unusual confusion seemed to be taking place in the house. Madge's face appeared for a moment at the window—flushed, tear-stained—changed from the flower-like loveliness of last night.

A maid came running out to summon the boy who looked after the only occupant of the stable, and Ainslie caught the word "doctor," in the hurried colloquy which took place.

"Is Captain Wingfield ill?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," answered the cook—evidently an old and privileged servant—"he's took very bad, is poor master, and no wonder! getting bad news so sudden, when the doctor said, above all things, shocks was to be avoided."

"Bad news!" Colonel Ainslie hesitated—he shrank from prying into his friend's affairs at such a moment, and would not question the garrulous cook. "Please ask Miss Madge if I may see her for a moment," he added quickly. "I will not detain her from her father's room."

She came to him, looking more child-like even than on the previous evening, her blue eyes clouded with trouble, her mouth quivering. "Poor child," he said, taking the two little hands in his kind, strong grasp; "what is it?"

"The bank has failed," said Madge piteously, "and we are ruined! I should not care except for father. But it will kill him to go away from here, and go we must: there is nothing left, except my mother's two thousand pounds! We must go to Boulogne or somewhere and live on that, he says! Oh my poor father! he did so love this place, our little home, where mamma is buried."

A strange wild impulse flashed into Ainslie's mind as the pretty creature stood sobbing before him. He had always been an impetuous man, and a hater of the prudent saying, "second thoughts are best." "Madge," he held her hands tighter and tried to look into her face, "if a way could be found to save your father — to spare him the pain of leaving his home—would you give your help towards it, even if some effort, some sacrifice were required?"

"I would do *anything* for father's sake," she said, looking straight at him with her innocent eyes. "Oh! tell me what way there is——"

"Not now, not yet," he dropped her hands with a pitying, half-sad smile on his kind face. "Go, dear, and ask your father if I may come to him. He will not mind seeing his old friend Jack. We have stood by one another in many a boyish trouble."

A week later, and little Madge was betrothed to her father's friend. It seemed like a dream: she still called him "Godfather," and nothing in their relative positions seemed changed.

The girl scarcely knew whether she was happy or not; she was only conscious of a sense of relief and restfulness, for her father was brighter than she had seen him for years, in the three-fold joy of having his old friend restored, his home saved and his child provided for. For every penny of his moderate fortune had Colonel Ainslie settled on his fair young bride; much of it, indeed, had been sunk in the purchase of the house and estate so dear to her father. He had inherited it, mortgaged and encumbered, some years before, and had loved it as a haven of rest after a chequered life of trial. To think of it as belonging to Madge and her children in the future, was to him a never-ending source of delight.

And Colonel Ainslie himself?

He treated his beautiful little betrothed as something too delicate and fragile for every-day life, and never looked at her without feeling it, as he said, something like sacrilege to show his ugly face beside that little angel's.

"I've always wanted something to pet and take care of, but I never dreamed of such a dainty piece of Dresden china for my very own," he said one evening, fondly stroking her yellow locks. "Are you sure, my darling, that you don't repent? Think of having to go through life with my gorilla-face always in the foreground."

"Don't call yourself ugly names," and Madge's soft little hand touched his lips. "Besides, if you were ten times more horrid than you make out, should I not love you and be grateful to you for making my father so happy? And I need never leave him, need I? This will be his home always?"

"Always, little Madge, please God." But he sighed; it was to be "father's" home; did she care at all that it should be his also?

"He is so good, Chrissie—so generous; and my father loves him so much," was all she would say, when her cousin spoke to her in her

tender, almost motherly way, of her new prospects. And Christine sighed. What did this simple, childish creature know of the depths of the great heart she had won?

The weeks rolled on, and the corn ripened in the fields, and fruit mellowed on the trees, and September would soon be come; and with it Madge's wedding day.

Only three days more now—and Colonel Ainslie, who had been in London to hurry on the completion of settlements, was walking across the fields to Woodleigh from the Rectory, where, pending the wedding, his headquarters were fixed. He had reached the stile where he half expected to meet Madge, and already his lips were forming themselves into the whistle which was his usual signal, when he became aware of voices near him.

The speakers were hidden from him, but his ears were quick to recognise Madge's sweet tones.

The deeper voice of her companion puzzled him at first—half involuntarily he drew back, and concealed himself behind a bryony-wreathed hedge. As he did so these words smote his ear.

"Madge—Madge, how could you do it? I was away from home—I knew nothing until my people wrote me word two days ago, and I thought the news would have killed me. Child, were you blind, or have you no heart? Did you not know that I was waiting—working—slaving for you—my one hope and guiding-star? I have loved you longer than I can remember, and you have loved me too—you can not deny it—it has grown with our growth—been part of our very selves——"

"Charlie, Charlie!" How different were the agitated tones from the cool, gentle accents Ainslie was accustomed to hear. "Don't be cruel—it is too late now—yes, quite too late. I did not know what I was doing—I don't think I knew how it would part you and me for ever. It was for father's sake——" A burst of tears here choked her utterance.

The hand of the unseen listener clenched itself tightly on the bough he held, unconscious of the thorns that were tearing glove and flesh alike. He stood there spell-bound, unable by word or sign to reveal his presence.

The pleading tones recommenced. "Charlie, you must help me to be brave—not make it harder. He is so kind and generous—it ought not to be so hard—and it was for father's sake—it has made him so happy."

"And you never once thought of me?" the young man said in bitter reproach. "Never gave one passing memory to the heart you had won and broken?"

"Dear Charlie, yes. When it was too late. I knew—Oh! I knew too well what I had done. But God will help us both, if we try to—to bear it—and do our duty——"

The poor little childish courage broke down once more, and the

young man—(Ah! Ainslie could see his handsome face, and tall, athletic figure now, as he came closer) sprang forward and seized her hand. "Madge, my darling—my own little playfellow, give up this unnatural engagement—better repent now than when it is too late—"

"No, no, no," she shrank back, almost passionately thrusting him from her—"Charlie—dear Charlie, I must not—I dare not listen——"

A moment later Ainslie could see her flitting homewards across the grass, and he had but just time to draw back and conceal himself, ere the young man, leaping impetuously over the style, strode back in another direction.

"Ah! little Madge, could you not have trusted me? Did you think I would accept such a sacrifice as this, even 'for father's sake?'"

"But you will forgive!" and in her terror the girl was almost kneeling at his feet. "Oh, godfather! be patient with me a little while, and indeed, indeed I will try——"

"I know you would. See, my child, I am not angry; I know how hard it has been and how loyally you have striven."

"I did not know it when you spoke to me first; it seemed to come upon me by degrees that it was giving up Charlie for ever. And now he—but oh! it would be worse to break my father's heart."

"And you shall not. Do you think you are to have all the generosity on your side, little one? I will explain all to your father, but in my own way. Marriage is not for me—old soldier and confirmed bachelor as I have been these forty-four years. And for your father—surely he need not scruple to accept the paltry gift of a few thousands from the man whose good genius he was in brighter days! Nay, child, do not thank me—I am not sure that I can bear that—yet——"

Not till long afterwards did Ainslie realise to the full what he had done in giving away his patrimony.

For his immediate needs, his salary at the Horse-Guards amply sufficed, and in breaking off his engagement with Madge—the blame of which he took wholly upon himself—he imagined that he for ever put an end to his own thoughts or intentions of marriage.

He left the neighbourhood of West Moor as soon as he could do so without the appearance of a quarrel, and in due time heard from the Rector of Madge's engagement to Charlie Fullerton, who, beginning life as a country solicitor, gave promise of being a rising man of some ability.

"Wingfield did not like it at first," wrote the Rector, "and poor little Madge seemed out of spirits, but Charlie is a nice lad, and things are working round. I hope when they are really married we may see you down again in these parts, dear old chap."

A few months later a chance meeting brought Colonel Ainslie and Christine Wingfield face to face.

From her he learned that her cousin was married, and her father not only reconciled, but well-pleased with his handsome son-in-law.

The months went by, and once more Ainslie was at Woodleigh, standing beside the grave of the friend for whom he had made the great sacrifice of his life.

And Madge was there, stunned and speechless in her grief, and clinging for support scarcely so much to her husband as to Christine, the strong, gentle woman, in whose very face and voice there was a sense of restfulness and calm.

Too late Jack Ainslie knew what he had done! In that grave of that dead friend lay buried the last hope of earthly happiness for him. No wife could ever be asked to share his poverty; no childish voice could cheer his lonely old age—he had taken up the burden with his eyes open and he must bear it to the end. "And it can make no difference," he said to himself with a sad attempt at cheerfulness. "What woman would ever cast in her lot with such as I? One glance at the looking-glass ought to be a standing answer to that question." But deep down in his heart was the knowledge that one woman—aye, and the fairest and noblest of his acquaintance, would accept his love with pride and joy, could he honestly dare to offer it.

"Godfather! dear godfather!"

It was the old childish appeal, and Madge's two little hands were clasped in the old childish way round his sleeve.

"We want you to take it back—to let Charlie feel himself an honest man, and me a happy wife! Nay, you must not refuse—it is just and right. Your generous sacrifice bore its full fruit; *he* lived and died at the dear old house, just as you wished; and now it must be your own, as it ought to be. We have enough—ah! more than we need, since God took our little one to Himself; and the thought of having wronged you is ever a bitter thorn in Charlie's heart. Take it back, dear godfather, and let him feel fit to shake your kind hand and meet your honest glance at last."

And Ainslie took it back—almost against his will, and accepting it as an incubus at first, but gradually realising to what this was the opening of a door: and the little home became to him almost as dear as it had once been to poor Wingfield, from the day he brought Christine home as its mistress.

OF CHEERFULNESS.

By A. H. Japp, LL.D.

THERE is no virture that has been more celebrated by poets and novelists than cheerfulness. "Keep a cheerful frame of mind," says one, "for that is the sunshine that never fails: it will enrich others; it will endow thee with the thousandfold reflection of thine own light from the faces of others which it hath already transfigured."

It is the root of constancy; for there is no more shifty and unreliable person than your curmudgeon, who is the slave of his own caprices; it is the best assurance of life, health and wealth; it is the sign and evidence of a steady and energetic mind. It will make a fruitful youth, a happy manhood and a serene old age. It is the "open sesame" to many secrets which the discontented and peevish strive hard to discover but always miss; it is the magic medium of friendship, if not even of love; where there may be lack of special tastes and sympathies, cheerfulness will do much to supply their place. As water to the flower, so is cheerfulness to the mind. It keeps all green and sweet; and sends forth a gracious savour that is imperceptible, but wins all by its perfume.

By cheerfulness a man's powers of work and production are doubled; he has, as it were, taken in a set of working partners most ready to aid him in every task and enterprise. Cheerfulness keeps all the faculties in good condition, so that they are ever ready to do their utmost without strain.

Even from the lips of those who have failed to make the most of this virtue, we have the most earnest tributes to it. Witness Thomas Carlyle, who has devoted to it a few very fine passages in "Past and Present," and in "The Life of Schiller;" while his letters attest a most lively appreciation of its value as a factor in life.

Goethe (from whom on these points Carlyle learned so much, though too often he failed practically to apply the lesson) has declared that "Cheerfulness is the mother of every virtue." All the most active men in the world's history—those who have achieved most, and acted most beneficently on their fellow-men—have been loud in praise of Cheerfulness. If one reads the early English dramatists one will find that, though they often erred and went too far, their ambition was to be ministers of cheerfulness, to promote generosity, good fellowship, social toleration in all directions. Certainly this is true of Shakespeare, of Dekker, of Middleton, of Ford and Ben Jonson. And here they are at one with the poets. We have the following from the sweet if somewhat tricky muse of Herrick:—

"In all thy need be thou possest
Still with a well prepared breast;

Nor let the shackles make thee sad :
Thou canst but have what others had.
And this for comfort thou must know :
Times that are ill won't still be so ;
Clouds will not ever pour down rain,
A sullen day will clear again ;
First peals of thunder we must hear,
Then lutes and harps shall strike the ear."

The dominating note of the Addisonian literature is a gracious, gregarious cheerfulness ; truth is robed, if not in motley, then in bright colours, and the sad facts of life are honestly set forth with a beaming smile. It was a rule of the house then to be quietly cheerful ; the pages of Steele and Goldsmith attest it as well as those of Addison and Johnson. The cheerfulness of the latter, indeed, considering his morbid bodily condition, is as remarkable as anything else about him, and his patient surrender of his own will in his own house in favour of a lot of nondescript pensioners, to whom he never spoke but cheerfully and kindly, is a proof that he practised as well as preached. Brave and kindly bluff old Samuel !

If cheerfulness, according to Solomon, doeth good like a medicine, no profession is more called on to have it in their aid than medical men. They cannot bring a better recipe in supplement of their prescriptions. Bitter must be the cup that a smile will not sweeten. Men who take gloomy views, who never see the bright side, who have, as it would seem, a delight in making known the worst—fore runners of misfortune, croaking ravens of destiny—ought to be banished from the medical profession. We have known cases where great learning and skill were made of non-effect or nearly so, by a most perverse tendency to tell the worst. Sir Robert Christison, the great Scottish physician, who perhaps did more than any man of his generation to test the specific action of poisons, even on his own person and often at the risk of his life, says, in one of the letters which his sons some time ago gave to the world through the Messrs. Blackwood :—

" It is sheer nonsense to get into low spirits, and quite wrong to look to the shady instead of the sunny side of the future. I was long ago prone to that error myself, but I was lucky enough to discover the mistake, and you have no idea how life improves under the opposite habit—health too, I should think, and longevity—nay, probably even wealth, conformably with one's greater vigour and determination. The real truth is, this earth is a much snugger and more agreeable residence than a certain class of poets and moralists pretend."

Thus it is plainly our interest as well as our duty, under all the circumstances of life, to cultivate Cheerfulness ; for we may be sure that the sunshine with which we gladden others' lives will be reflected upon our own with a twofold power and benediction.

SECRETS.

The Story of a Daisy Chain.

I.

OUR outlook certainly was not bright. We had been married only six weeks when one of my two pupils decided to give up reading for the law, and go to Manitoba; and I had not the remotest prospect of a brief. Of course, my wife, Dorothy, had nothing: indeed, that was my reason for inducing her to marry me with so little consideration for the future. She had been living with a clerical aunt and uncle, who were themselves so poor that Dorothy slaved all day long to supply the deficiencies of governess, nurse and cook; and I was sanguine enough to infect her with the belief that I was likely, in a short time, to distinguish myself at the Bar.

But when we were actually married, I began to find that money did not "come in" as I had vaguely expected; and when young Briggs sent me a note one morning to say that he had made up his mind that he was not meant for a lawyer, I felt sick at heart. Dorothy must be told; and that was very hard. I tried not to show how despondent I felt, but Dorothy's sympathetic eyes were too much for me, and I said sorrowfully:

"I meant your life to be smoother, and now I have only brought fresh hardships on you, my darling!"

"Oh, nonsense!" said my wife with her brightest smile. "We are a long way from hardship yet, you extravagant boy. Of course if you are sorry you married me, that is a different matter. But since you can't help yourself now, you might have the grace to say nothing about it."

"You may laugh if you can," I answered gloomily, "but what are we to do? We can't pay our rent out of Thompson's fees if we are to spend any money at all on dinners. But I shouldn't care if it weren't for you."

"And *I* shouldn't care if it weren't for *you*," said Dorothy. "Can't we think of something, though? Surely there are hundreds of ways of making money, if one only knew how to set about it. And you can do so many things. Have you ever thought of lecturing?" she continued, after a minute's hard thought. "Don't you remember how successful Percy Beaufort-Jones was last year? Only, to be sure, he read his own poems; and," went on my wife, who was often pleased to indulge in a little satire, and who always spoke at such times in her softest and sweetest tones—"you would have to let your hair grow long and wild, and I must teach you to glare—like this!" And she tried to scowl at me from under her brown curls before she broke into a merry laugh.

"Yes," I said; "and I should have to learn to be a most consummate ass all round. I think you had better find some occupation more suitable for Mrs. Hardcastle's husband, my dear."

"Well, let me think again," she said, shutting her eyes and rocking herself gently to and fro. "You might write a novel. That must be an easy way of earning money, I should think. Only don't make it religious, Gerald: I think that is quite wrong. And don't make it philanthropic—that is overdone just now. And *don't* bring in any wild adventures or any people that go off in smoke. Those books are so dreadfully dull. And whatever you do, don't put *any* crimes into it. I couldn't touch the money if you earned it by one of those horrible things on the bookstalls."

"I'm not likely to try," I said, persisting in melancholy. "I never could tell a story in my life; and publishers are not so confiding as to press funds upon an unknown author. No: I must look out for more pupils. There's nothing else to be done."

Secretly a thought had occurred to me, but it was too desperate to share with Dolly until I had tried to carry it out. When I was at Cambridge I had often contributed stray verses to the *Review*, and these had been much admired by my friends. Since my college days I had written others, which I had never shown to anyone. They were all addressed to Dolly; and when I wrote them I had intended giving them to her some day; but a few words which she had dropped with reference to a very similar collection, which had fallen into her hands, caused me to consign my effusions to an unfrequented drawer. Dolly's words, "He read his own poems," brought mine vividly before me; and I wondered if I could do anything with them.

As soon as my wife had left the room, I took them out and read them over. They were not so bad as I had feared; indeed, some of them I read with a faint glow of pride. Could I dispose of them with any hope of remuneration? And could I write others as good upon other themes?

I determined to try; Dolly would be proud of my performance when she saw it in print, and even if she laughed at my poems, I could laugh too, and show her the cheque they had brought me. But I was not novice enough to believe that the first step on the ladder of literary fame was easy of access. One of my college friends was sub-editor of a London daily paper, and I thought that he was likely to know if I had any chance of success. I often saw him, and I knew that he would do me a good turn if he could, so I made up my mind to ask his advice. I felt ridiculously young and shy as I walked to his office, and when I went upstairs and knocked at his door I was as nervous as I ever felt in my life. When Baynes looked up from his table, he leaned back in his chair and said: "Why, Hardcastle, what's the matter? You didn't see a ghost on the way up, did you?"

I began to think I would keep my poems till another day. Baynes

looked heartlessly prosperous and busy, and all my pride rose at the thought of his cool criticism of my work. I talked aimlessly for a few minutes and then rose to go.

"By the way, I hear young Briggs is leaving the country," said Baynes. "Won't that be a loss for you?"

"Oh, I daresay I shall survive it," I returned in a tone which I tried to make as light and careless as I could. "I never thought much of him; he is a dull fellow. No, I don't think he's much of a loss."

"I meant from a money point of view," said Baynes, watching me too curiously as I thought.

"Oh, bother the money!" I answered grandly. "Briggs isn't my only pupil. But I must be off; come and see us soon, old fellow. Good-bye."

So I went, leaving Baynes to wonder what was the object of my visit. I felt angry with him, but still more angry with myself for my childish folly. I was tempted to throw my poems into the fire when I came home—but I thought of Dolly and was calmed. One effort I would make: I would send some of them to a magazine, and would abide the issue with a courageous heart. I chose out five short lyrics which were slightly connected together, and which I called "A Daisy Chain;" these I copied out carefully and sent to the *British Artists' Magazine*, a new and very popular illustrated monthly. Of course I wrote a short note to the editor, in which I pointed out that these verses were eminently suitable for illustration. In the note I gave my own name and address; the poems I signed H. G.

II.

A FORTNIGHT passed away. I succeeded in getting another pupil, so that for the present we were relieved from anxiety; but I dreaded a repetition of our late scare, and I was anxious to render it impossible. I had tried to write another poem, but I found that ideas were wanting, and I persuaded myself that I had better wait and see how "A Daisy Chain" fared before embarking in any fresh poetical enterprise. Why fortune should have suddenly favoured me, I know not; but one day, to my intense gratification, I received a kind letter from the editor of the *British Artists' Magazine*, thanking me for my contribution and enclosing a cheque for six guineas. My poems were a success. I would not for the world have changed places with Browning or with Tennyson at that moment. Their reputation was made and could never rise any higher; but there was no limit to the fame and the wealth that I would lay at Dolly's feet. I was on the point of telling her the glorious news, when I reflected that it would be more dramatic to hand her the magazine with the cheque, marking the place most interesting to her and to me: so I determined that she should know nothing about it until the poems came out. I went back to my study and overhauled the rest, resolved to write as copiously as I could and so to take the tide at its flow.

Meanwhile, Dorothy had not noticed my preoccupation, and I congratulated myself on keeping my secret so well. She still spent a good deal of her time in the service of her aunt and uncle, and I was glad that she need never be lonely when I was busy with my pupils. When she did not appear for some hours together I grumbled at the clerical family, but she always laughed and said she must have plenty to do.

It was November when I sent my "Daisy Chain" to the *British Artist*, and December and January passed without showing me my poems in print. At last I determined not to look out for the magazine again, and of course the February number was the one I ought to have seen on its first appearance. It was three or four days old when I saw upon the cover: "A Daisy Chain, by H. G., illustrated by J. Gilbert Leighton, Jun." I joyously bought a copy and took it home to our flat. But no Dorothy came to meet me as I opened our door: only our little maid appeared to tell me that her mistress had been hastily summoned to St. John's Vicarage, Canonbury, for Master James had had an accident on his bicycle and had "cut his head awful." I was too happy to care much for the temporary disappointment, and I knew too well the propensity of Master James for getting into scrapes to be much overcome by the news. A little later on a note came to tell me that dear auntie had quite given way, and that Dolly must stay with her for the night, but that she would be home as early as possible on the morrow.

Postponing the pleasure of sharing my pleasure with Dolly, I went to bed and dreamed whole volumes of poetry. I awoke with a delightful sense of bliss, present and future, and Dolly's sweet face, all aglow with pride and happiness, was constantly before my eyes as I dressed. Sitting down to my solitary breakfast-table, I opened my newspaper and propped it up before me as in the old bachelor days. There was a political leader of some length which I skimmed conscientiously, and next came an article on Magazine Poetry. This looked more interesting. I buttered a piece of toast and began to read more carefully.

Judge of my surprise, nay, my horror, when I discovered that "A Daisy Chain" was the principal victim of the ruthless barbarian who penned that article. It was written in the style of Macaulay on Robert Montgomery; only amid the volleys of censure and of ridicule there was now and then heard a gentle tone of mockery that was maddening to a sensitive mind—whole lines of my poems were compared with lines from Tennyson and Swinburne and other authors whom I knew only by name; and it was insinuated that I had plagiarised all round. Even Shakespeare was trotted out, as if a man could be responsible in the nineteenth century for what Shakespeare had said in the days of Queen Elizabeth. The article began with that threadbare story of the young officer who went to see "Hamlet," and who remarked that the play seemed full of quotations.

Then followed some nonsense about an almanac. I had written one group of verses about lovers parting on a June evening; and I had said that "the blue blaze of the hunter's sword" "flashed in the moonless summer heaven." It had never occurred to me to ask whether Orion was visible in England at that particular season. And surely Mr. Besant has introduced a much greater blunder into one of his books, where he makes the new moon rise at three o'clock in the morning. No one thinks the worse of Mr. Besant for this astronomical slip; but my critic laughed mercilessly at my ignorance, and something about lighted brandy round a Christmas pudding—the point of which I have never yet seen—rounded off the paragraph.

Two or three other poems were held up to scorn along with mine, but I cared nought for my fellow-sufferers. I was only too glad that I had not seen the magazine when it first came out, as I should certainly have shown it to Dorothy, and I had an instinctive feeling that if there was so much in my verses that deserved ridicule, she would be sure to find it out.

After I had spent a couple of hours over my coaching, I returned to the dining-room, where my wife always sat in the mornings when she was at home. She had returned from the vicarage, and she came to meet me with cheeks as glowing and eyes as bright as I had pictured to myself before the blow fell on me. The injured cousin was going on well: auntie was now quite composed, and Dolly was very glad to be at home again.

"And now, my own Gerald, I want to tell you something," she said, laying her little hand on mine in an appealing way. "You know we always said we would never have secrets between us—and I expect you to tell me everything you do and plan. But——"

("Good Heavens!" thought I, "how has she found me out?")

"But," went on my wife, with a curious tremor in her voice, "we must have secrets no longer. See, my husband!"

As she spoke she took up that wretched newspaper, and held it behind her back.

"I asked Mr. Baynes to look at some things I wrote just to amuse myself years ago when I was a girl" (Dorothy was not quite twenty-one), "and to tell me if I could ever hope to get anything published. He took them away and read them, and he has given me an engagement to write one literary article a week in the *Daily Leader*. And —oh Gerald!—they pay me *so* well. And Mr. Baynes said I might choose the first subject myself, so I began with some miserable poems I had just seen in the *British Artist*. I couldn't bear to tell you till it was printed, for I could hardly believe they would take it after all. But here it is, and you will forgive me, won't you?"

I stooped and kissed my wife's forehead, but I could not say a word.

"You don't *mind* not being told before—do you?"

"No," I said, "but I might perhaps not have written those poems

and I certainly should not have published them, if I had known how you would treat them," and I tried to smile. My wife started back in horror.

"*You*, Gerald? *You?*" was all she could say. Then, with her bright laugh—"Oh, you are only joking. How unkind of you!"

"I'm not joking," I said calmly, drawing her back to me. "I wrote 'A Daisy Chain,' and a good many other poems two years ago when I first saw you; and when young Briggs went off and we wanted money so badly, I sent it to the *British Artist*. But I am glad, my darling, that your literary venture is likely to succeed, only I don't want my wife to work for her living."

I went on talking because I felt my small Dorothy trembling all over. Her face was hidden in her hands. I put my arms round her and tried to soothe the violent distress I saw she could not control.

"It will be a grand joke, some day, when we are rich and great," I said. "But what a good thing no one need know. You mustn't tell, and of course I won't. What shall we do with the money? I think we might get those new glasses for your uncle at once, and take them to him this evening." I made this suggestion thinking it the most comforting I could devise, but Dorothy only started up and flung herself at my feet, crying:

"Oh, Gerald, don't forgive me like that! I can't bear it."

She gave me one look that was quite tragic in its despair, and then bent her head again, hiding her face and sobbing as if her heart would break.

"My own darling," I said, raising her again and placing her on my knee, "I cannot bear to see you suffer like this. I am not hurt in the least, and you were perfectly right in all that you said. The poems *were* great rubbish and I deserved all I got. Won't you believe me when I tell you I am perfectly happy about them? If you would not take it to heart I shouldn't care a fig."

I went on for nearly half-an-hour, trying all my arts to make her look up and smile. She said nothing but "Oh, how *could* I do it?" and "Don't be kind to me. I can't forgive myself," till I felt desperate, and heartily wished the *Daily Leader* and the *British Artist* at the bottom of the sea. At last I induced her to lie down upon the sofa, for she was quite exhausted with her repentance.

"My poor little Dolly," I said, stroking her hair away from her throbbing temples; "you should not let things trouble you so intensely. I am the real culprit, and you don't give me any room for repentance, though I need it worse than you. Now let me read you asleep till lunch time."

"Will you read whatever I like?"

"Of course I will; only choose something not too exciting."

"I want to hear those other poems. You *ought* to have shown them to me before." Dorothy's voice again trembled, and I hastened to say: "You shall have them, every one. my dearest. They are in

the study. But I won't begin till you are as tranquil as I am. You don't know how moving they may be."

So I read, sitting by Dorothy's sofa and holding her hand in mine. At first I carefully avoided showing any feeling in my voice, but as I went on I seemed to go back to the days when my love for Dorothy had come into my life with a strange new power that mastered me and made me her "servant" as truly as Valentine was Silvia's. I forgot myself, and thought only of the hopes and fears that had inspired my verses.

When I came to the end of my manuscript I looked at Dorothy. I had succeeded admirably. She was fast asleep.

III.

THAT very evening Baynes called. Dorothy and I had been sitting over the fire, talking seriously but not anxiously about our future. On one point Dorothy seemed to have made up her mind; she would never write another article for the *Daily Leader*.

"No, Gerald, don't laugh. I *couldn't* go on with that dreadful paper," she said, with a shudder that appealed most successfully to my compassion. I was not at all sorry that she should abandon the *Leader*, for though I was willing to let my wife do anything in the world that pleased her, I could not bring myself to like the notion of allowing her to work for money.

When Baynes was announced Dorothy rose with an unusually frigid air, and I was forced to put on an equally unusual cordiality in order to keep the hospitable balance. He seemed puzzled at first, but reassured by my friendliness he accepted a cup of coffee and said:

"The chief is delighted with your article, Mrs. Hardcastle. He hopes you will fall on the American mags. some day. Their poetry is mostly execrable. I can send you shoals of back numbers if you like."

"You are very kind," said Dorothy coldly, "but I feel quite unable to go on with those articles. I am sorry to have given you so much trouble."

"Not go on?" and Baynes looked from Dorothy to me with astonishment and alarm. "Why, my dear Mrs. Hardcastle, we have put you on the staff—you have promised us your pen. And your first has been a most absolute success. Why, I met Reeves as I was coming here to-night—the editor of the *British Artist* you know—and he is delighted. He says he will get you to write on newspaper leaders for him. I thought he would have been in a rage about H. G., but he says H. G.'s poems will be all the fashion after this. He wanted me to divulge your name but of course I was firm—so you see you cannot honourably desert us now."

Dorothy sat looking outwardly unmoved, but I could see that it was hard for her to keep control of herself, so I said:

"It's my permission you ought to ask if you want my wife to write

I don't approve of such independence, and I must take time to consider whether I will allow it."

Baynes again looked at us both as if he thought we were a little crazy. I laughed and said to Dorothy "You see what difficulties you get into when you neglect to consult your husband, my dear. But I think you are bound in honour to go on with the *Leader* just now. Try the effect of a eulogium next week, and then you can go back and scalp the Americans with a will."

"Do you really think I am bound?" said Dolly, with rising colour.

"Yes, dear; I really do."

"Then," said Dolly, turning to Baynes, "I will go on if you wish; but I must ask an additional favour. Will you give me an introduction to Mr. Reeves?"

"With pleasure," answered Baynes, with an air of relief. "Reeves is a good fellow, only rather worldly. He thinks a great deal of what pays and very little of what you call the higher uses of literature. And yet the *British Artist* poses as the pioneer of fresh thought and original work. Reeves is a clever man."

"I don't wish him to know my name," said Dolly.

"Very well. I can manage it if you send me your MS.," returned the obliging Baynes, who, I could see, greatly admired my wife.

Need I say what followed? In the next issue of the *British Artist* was a tremendous article upon newspaper articles. The writer openly flung down the gauntlet to the *Daily Leader*, and challenged the literary taste of that worthy organ for attempting to throw any imputation upon the genius of H. G. "An almanac, a dictionary of quotations, and a pen dipped in gall are the furniture of our critics in these days," said my champion; "but poets must still be equipped with sympathy, with imagination, with power of language; and, possessed of these, the author of 'A Daisy Chain' may well be content." I did not see this rejoinder till it was in print, but even if I had seen it I could not have prevented my Dorothy from publishing it. Indeed, I was glad to find that as soon as she had made amends after this fashion she ceased to feel so keenly her unfortunate attack upon me.

No, I never wrote any more poems. Soon after that I got my first brief, and fortune has been kind to us ever since. Dorothy ceased to write for the press when our first son came to claim all her time and thought, and though she often talks of putting into print some of the stories she is continually inventing for our four little people, she has never yet been able to begin. Baynes was inconsolable when she gave up the *Leader*, and Mr. Reeves wrote once to me asking me for some more verses, but I "declined with thanks," and for once in his life the great man must have felt like a doctor who is compelled to swallow his own physic.

So Margaret set to work on the ruined water-mill, while Mr. Plock lounged at her feet, asking no greater happiness than to be near her.

THE ARGOSY.

APRIL, 1892.

ASHLEY.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER IV.

THE DELAYED WILL.

"ASHLEY for ever!" "Storm for ever!" Now Scarlet-and-purple! Now Yellow! Who wins? Who loses? Banners floating, streamers flying, drums beating, trumpets blowing! Oh, the confusion, the excitement, the noise and worry of a contested election!

The green balcony in front of the "Ashley Arms" was crowded with gentlemen. The rosettes of scarlet-and-purple ribbons displayed by some of them were sufficient to denote that they belonged to the Ashley party. Standing bare-headed in its centre, and leaning over the rail, as if about to address the mob, was the candidate in the Ashley interest. He was a tall, pleasant-looking man, somewhere about thirty, with light curling hair and a keen grey eye. It was Arthur Ashley, but his face was thinner than it used to be and his frame less robust. The county returned two members. The one, Colonel Paget, had been its representative many years, and was always sure of his return, and Sir Henry Ashley had now brought his nephew forward as the other. Very little canvassing had taken place: it was thought unnecessary, for a contest was not contemplated: when, a few days before that fixed for the election, a third man was announced. Who was it? No one could tell at first: but to the astonishment of the public and indignation of Sir Harry, it turned out to be Richard Storm, an attorney in extensive practice at Stopton, a neighbouring town. Then began all the bustle, the ill-feeling of a contested election. Mr. Storm was a popular man in his vocation, of ready speech and vulgar wit, but that took with the multitude: and he was certainly a bold man, for he had appeared in the village of Ashley, to court the Ashley votes, which anyone else might have supposed to be as safe as Sir Henry's own. Sir Harry consequently was in a towering passion, and wrote an exaggerated account of the

proceedings to his wife, who was then sojourning in London on her return from Paris, fully expecting her to share in his indignation.

A wide yellow banner, "Storm and the People for ever!" was streaming from the beer-shop, opposite the only inn in the place, which was the "Ashley Arms," haughtily inaccessible to anything yellow. This beer-shop had a flat roof, ascendable by a ladder and a trap-door. It was not an inconvenient standing spot, and, for want of a better, the yellows made the roof their headquarters, where Mr. Storm harangued the Ashleyites. At the present moment the roof was deserted, for the yellow band and the banners and the committee, and what recruits they had been able to enlist, were on a parading tour through the village. When they came in front of the "Ashley Arms," Mr. Ashley had begun his speech: hisses, groans and drums instantly struck up, to drown it, but Mr. Storm waved his hand and commanded silence.

"My friends and followers," he said, "let us not forget courtesy. Our rival in the Scarlet-and-purple interest is speaking. Well, let him speak: why should we interrupt him? Keep silence. Who's afraid?"

Arthur Ashley, with a half-smile, inclined his head to Mr. Storm, and continued his address:

"I need not remind you that I am one of yourselves. I have grown up amongst you, and your interests are identical with mine. If there is one spot on this earth that is dear to me, it is Ashley: if there is one place I would, above all others, see prosperous and happy, it is Ashley: if there is a body of men I would serve at the sacrifice of time, health and spirits, it is you, my friends, who have been born and bred at Ashley. I need not say that I will support those measures calculated to conduce to your prosperity, or that I will strenuously oppose all such as would tell unfavourably upon you and upon your soil, because it would be impossible for me to do otherwise, for I repeat that I am one of yourselves, and in promoting your honour and welfare, I promote that of my own family. You have ever found Sir Henry Ashley a liberal landlord; you found Sir Arthur such; you ——"

At this moment a carriage-and-four came thundering up the hill—for the village of Ashley was not built on level ground—the postboys wearing yellow rosettes as large as their hats. It scared the crowd, whether scarlets or yellows, right and left, and drew sharply up, underneath the balcony.

"Who in the name of wonder is this?" exclaimed Sir Harry Ashley, as he stood at his nephew's elbow. "A well-appointed carriage, gentlemen," he whispered. "Where can our friend of the law have picked up so influential a supporter?"

"Why—egad, Sir Harry! it is your own carriage!" responded Squire Prout. "What the dickens does it mean?"

"My carriage!" loftily uttered the offended baronet. "I think you mistake, squire."

"It bears your arms, at any rate."

Sir Harry Ashley put on his glasses. To his amazement, to his horror, almost to his dread, the carriage did bear his arms. But this compound of feelings was as nothing to the dismay which overpowered him, when Lady Ashley, *his* wife, put her hand out of the carriage window, and her head after it, and swung about a yellow rosette, larger than any there.

"My dear," he roared out in his sonorous voice, though perhaps, had he betrayed his genuine feelings, he would have addressed her by a less endearing title—"My dear, you are labouring under a confounded misapprehension. Our colours are scarlet and purple. Postboys, throw those yellow drabs to the ground."

"Postboys," retorted Lady Ashley, "keep the bows where they are." Though exceedingly dark, as one born in a warmer clime, she was a very handsome woman, nearly thirty years younger than Sir Harry, and she looked forth on the crowd with a determined countenance and daring lip.

"People," she began—no fear that she, in her haughty exclusiveness, would ever address inferiors as "friends"—"people, I am the wife of your chief, and I forbid you to record your votes for *him*."

She pointed, as she spoke, to Arthur Ashley. Sir Harry stood speechless with consternation.

"You know," she went on, "that Sir Harry had a son born to him, the heir to Ashley. You know that son was drowned. You were told it was an accident; that the child fell into the stream; but I, his mother, tell you it was no accident: that wicked man pushed him in, for he stood between him and Ashley. Will you permit such a man to be your representative?"

A conflicting sound rose from the astonished crowd: murmurs, hisses and groans. Some intended for the lady speaker, some for Mr. Ashley.

"But his crime has not succeeded—he has been foiled once more," continued Lady Ashley, her dark face assuming an expression of malignant triumph. "He put one heir out of the way, but another, as you have heard, was born to Sir Harry. Look at him." She seized, as she spoke, an infant of a few months old, perhaps eight or ten, who sat by her side on the knees of his coloured nurse, and held him up to the window, where but little of his face could be seen for the mass of yellow ribbons in his cap border. "Vote for the yellow, people! Yellow for ever!"

"It is as big a crammer as ever was imagined, good friends," screamed out little Surgeon Gay, stuttering in his excitement, as he looked down from a corner of the balcony, "and if it were not out of respect to Sir Harry's wife, I'd tell it you in stronger language. The child did fall in; he fell in of his own accord; and I'll be upon my oath to it, and so will Miller Heath's wife, who saw it done. Her ladyship's gone a little *here*, with the sorrow," tapping his fore-

head, "when she says that. Mr. Ashley had no more to do with it than you or I had. Ashley for ever! Long live Arthur Ashley!"

But with a wave of the hand, and a smile that expressed confidence in the crowd, Lady Ashley had signed to the postboys, and the carriage had resumed its way to Ashley.

Mr. Ashley, with a pale countenance, expressive more of sorrow than of anger, attempted to resume his speech, but public speaking had been put an end to for that day, and he was hooted down. Some of the mob tore, huzzaing, after Lady Ashley's carriage. As to Sir Harry, all he prayed for was that the balcony would fall in and let him down beyond sight and shame.

Now it was a perfectly well known fact, known beyond the possibility of doubt, that the death of the young heir to Ashley was purely accidental. The greater portion of those who made the crowd knew it to be so, and that Mr. Ashley, as Surgeon Gay said, had no more to do with it than they had. Nevertheless, will it be believed that they were ready, now the cue had been given them by Lady Ashley, to cast the crime in his teeth? Richard Storm was liberal with his secret money (or with somebody else's), the beer-shop kept its taps flowing free of charge, day and night, and the usual madness came over the voters.

When Ashley rose the next morning, the walls were covered with placards: "Who boned the child?" "Don't vote for Ashley, the m——r!" "What became of the heir? Streams are handy!" and with numerous others of a similiar tendency. Whilst a wretched daub had been hastily got up, of a drowned child being fished out of a stream, with a gentleman in black, supposed to represent A. A., peeping round a tree with fiendish triumph; and this was borne on a banner about the village. The unjust feeling grew to a pitch of excitement really marvellous, and when the following day came, which was the polling one, Mr. Ashley lost his election.

Sir Henry Ashley (to go back a day or two) descended from the balcony and strode after his wife's carriage, far more excited than the crazy mob. It was reported afterwards that, upon his reaching Ashley, a violent scene of disagreement took place between him and his wife. Certain it was, Sir Henry left within an hour for Stopton, and remained there until after the election, though he and his wife had not met for months. He had last seen her in October, and it was now June. Illness—the remains of a dangerous fever—had obliged him to return to England, leaving his wife and infant in a remote part of France. Shortly after, she had also journeyed on her return as far as Paris, and there she had stopped till now, neglecting her husband's letters of surprise and remonstrance.

As Sir Henry left Lady Ashley's room, banging the door after him and striding along the corridor with angry steps, he passed the chamber used as a nursery, and, hearing the infant's voice, turned into it. Little Blanche, his daughter, who had been his sole

companion during her mother's absence, was playing with the babe as it sat on the knee of the West Indian nurse. It was one of the lightest children in complexion ever seen. Blanche was fair, with flaxen curls, but the infant was totally dissimilar to her. Its hair and eye-brows were nearly white, its face was quite white, and its eyes were of a light, faint shade of blue. It was a strong, big child, with wide, coarse features.

The baronet naturally proceeded to take notice of the boy, not having seen it since it was two months old. He drew Blanche away, bent down, and held out his hand playfully.

"Nurse! Nana!" he suddenly broke forth, springing up again quicker than he had stooped down, "what have you been at with the child? You have changed its eyes and complexion."

The dark woman looked up, terror and perplexity written on her face, had Sir Henry been keen enough to read it. Her lips were strained back and her white teeth stood out.

"Nana done nothing, massa. Piccaninny same little piccaninny that massa leave."

"Same? of course it is the same, you stupid woman! I suppose," added the baronet more slowly, "these young babies do change their looks." He stooped again, and would probably have taken the child, but at that moment he heard his wife's door open and her voice calling for her French maid, Elise, whom she had brought from Paris.

"Changeable as the wind," he muttered to himself as he hastened downstairs and out of the house, on his way, as has been said, to Stopton. "Nothing would do, this spring, but I must discharge Barbarie—who suited for Blanche very well, and did her duty by her—upon the plea that she would have no French women in the house; I was inundated with letters and reproaches until I complied, and now she has brought home a French minx herself. Changeable as the wind."

Rumour! scandal! prejudice! how insinuating they are! It would seem almost impossible, but it is nevertheless true, that a feeling against Mr. Ashley grew up in the county. Lady Ashley must have had grounds for her accusation, reasoned the gentlemen over their wine; and it was a fact that only the unfortunate child had then stood between Arthur Ashley and the inheritance. Mr. Ashley became aware of this prejudice; some old friends were cool to him at the magistrates' meeting, where he one day accompanied Sir Henry; some refused his invitations, and some passed him over when they sent out their own. A feeling of bitter resentment arose within him. He felt sure that Lady Ashley was still at work, secretly traducing him, and he remembered the threat she had once uttered to him in her jealous rage: "I will wear those words in my heart, Arthur Ashley, until I am revenged." She was carrying out her threat with a vengeance; surely this was a heavy requital for his

having slighted her as Miss Carnagie. He took his resolution ; he would stop in such an unjust, prejudiced neighbourhood no longer, and away he departed for London with his wife and children. But ill news travels fast, and he found upon his arrival there, that the calumny had preceded him.

The years sped on. Arthur Ashley did not return, and Linden, the small house bordering on Ashley Park, which had been his residence, was kept shut up. One snowy afternoon in the week preceding Christmas, Edward Gay, surgeon and apothecary, as the words on his door-plate indicated, was in his surgery making up pills, when the window was darkened and the doctor saw the brown head of a traveller above the wire blind, peering in through the flakes of snow.

"Open the door, Jos," he said merrily to his son, a lad of fifteen, just entering upon the mysteries of drugs and anatomy. "I think I know that face."

"It is only some old traveller, father, wanting to learn how pills are compounded. Just look at the snow on his hat."

"If you don't do as I bid you, young gentleman, you will have the pills making acquaintance with your head," was the retort, in a make-believe angry tone. "Open the door, sirrah."

"And how goes the world with my friend Ned?" inquired the traveller, entering the surgery, after shaking the snow from his shoes and his hat, and depositing a stout walking-stick in a corner. "Easily?"

"As easily as the cold and a forest of young mouths will let it," was the quaint reply of the surgeon, holding out his hand and grasping that of Major Hayne. "You are not aged a day, Major. I thought you never meant to pay us a visit again. How long is it since you were here?"

"Five years."

"To be sure. When you brought home Sir Harry after the French fever."

"Ah! a near touch for him, that was," cried the Major. "I have been half way round the world since then, besides sojourning two years in Canada. Is Sir Harry well?"

"No. I fear he is in a bad way. These pills are for him. Jos, put on your cap and take them up."

"That's one of your young forest, I presume," said the Major, noticing Jos.

"The worst of the lot for taking in potatoes and sundries. His grinders stand at nothing. Be off, sir! Presto! Don't eat the pills as you go."

"What ails Sir Harry?" questioned Major Hayne, as Master Jos disappeared with the box of pills.

"A combination of complaints. Dropsy the most prominent."

The Major's face grew lengthy. "Seriously speaking, Gay, do you mean to say he is a confirmed invalid?"

"He's worse, Major. When I said he was going, I meant it. He is going fast."

"And my lady?" continued the Major, after a concerned pause.

"Don't ask me. Nothing ails her. She is no favourite of mine. I never did like her, but since her behaviour to Arthur Ashley, when she caused him to lose his election, I have despised and detested her. Her eldest child, Carnagie, was drowned, and she told the electioneering mob that he did it. Had I been Sir Harry, I should have put her into a madhouse that very day."

"Was there any mystery attached to the child's death?" questioned Major Hayne. "Sir Harry once said he would tell me the particulars, but he never did, and I did not choose to ask."

"None whatever: except in Lady Ashley's malignant spirit. To keep Arthur Ashley out of the succession, she would sell her soul to that near friend of hers, who wears horns and a tail; and when the accident happened which made Arthur Ashley again the heir presumptive, the evil of her nature broke out in an accusation against him. It occurred six years ago last July. Carnagie was racing after a butterfly, and raced himself, head foremost, into the stream. Dame Heath saw the accident; and poor Arthur Ashley sat fishing in the same stream, unconscious that there was a young soul, within a stone's throw, drowning for want of assistance. Down came my lady, when the alarm was given, and accused Arthur, in her mad passion, of putting the boy into the water, hardly knowing, I believe, what she said. She was frantic with grief for the loss of the *child*, and with rage for the loss of the *heir*. After that, they went abroad."

"Where another heir was born," rejoined the Major, "just as I met them at St. Ouest. I should as soon have expected to come upon a family from the moon as upon them, in that unfrequented spot, and so far from home. How many children are there now?"

"Only that one, besides the little girl. She has had no more."

"I must make acquaintance with the young gentleman when I go up to-day. I had him in my arms many a time the first few weeks of his life. He bears my name. Sir Harry was at a puzzle for one, and we thought Philip as good as any other. Something else, I think, was tacked on to it."

"Philip Ryle," said the surgeon. "But I did not finish about Arthur and Lady Ashley. You brought Sir Henry home, you know, five years ago, after that attack of fever at St. Ouest. We heard Lady Ashley was to follow very soon, and you left. But the months went on, and her ladyship never arrived: she was stopping in Paris. Arthur Ashley, with his wife and family, came down to Linden for Easter, for they had all passed that winter in London, he hard at work at his political duties. Soon after he came down, he was seized with inflammation of the lungs. I thought it was all over with him: it was what his father died of: and when he did get better, I told him he must not go back to town and to worry, if he wanted to

live. So he stayed at Linden. But in June, when the election came on, he was pretty well, and Sir Henry persuaded him to stand for the county, which he did. A third man came forward, a fellow from Stopton, Dick Storm, no more right to put up for a member than I have, and we all laughed at the notion of his standing against an Ashley. He was as sure of his return, was Arthur Ashley, as I am that I had roast mutton for my dinner this day. When, in the very nick of time, just as we were all assembled in this village street, candidates, county influence, farmers and mob, my Lady Ashley's carriage appears in the midst of us, like Banquo's ghost——"

"She was at home, then?" interposed Major Hayne.

"No. She had come post haste from London. It was her first entry into Ashley since she quitted it, nearly two years before. She stopped her carriage, waved Dick Storm's colours in our faces, and forbid the tenants to vote for Arthur Ashley, *because he had drowned the child, who stood between him and the inheritance.*"

"Absurd!" cried Major Hayne, his keen eye flashing. "Nobody but a Bess of Bedlam would venture on such a thing."

"A regular Bess of Bedlam she was, that day, if ever I saw one," returned Mr. Gay. "She persisted in her accusation, turned the anger of the mob against Arthur, and the upshot was, he lost his election and Storm got in. Quite a feeling was raised against Mr. Ashley throughout the neighbourhood, and he left it in disgust."

"What did Sir Harry do?"

"Not what he ought. He should have spoken up fearlessly at the time and defended his nephew, instead of taking refuge in silence, which of course gave a colouring to my lady's words. The fact is, Sir Harry is more under petticoat government than he was in his first wife's time, and if she chose to accuse himself of having drowned the child, he dare not gainsay it to her face. I spoke up, and I was a very humble individual, compared with some on the balcony, but my rile was raised, as the Yankees say. I should like to have ducked her in Prout's pond."

Major Hayne was a shrewd thinker, fond of tracing out cause and effect. "Lady Ashley must have had some private pique against Arthur!" he suddenly said.

"Surgeon Gay nodded a succession of nods.

"Do you know what it is?" asked the Major.

"I only know what's said."

"Well?"

"That when she was visiting here as Miss Carnagie, she was dying of love for Arthur Ashley," whispered the apothecary. "He led her on to it: perhaps he did not know what the passions of these half-caste West Indians are: and then she discovered that he was only amusing himself at her expense, for his affections were given to Anna Rivers, now his wife."

Major Hayne drew a long, deep breath, which ended in a whistle.

"Ho, ho, Mr. Arthur! then you must expect something. 'Hell has no fury like a woman scorned.' The poet spoke of an ordinary fury, and I reckon my lady has the elements of an extraordinary one."

"She just has. Major, not a word of this up yonder. Sir Harry has lived in blissful ignorance of the matter; indeed, few know it."

"Do you take me for a numskull, Ned?" retorted Major Hayne. "I hear and see, as I go through life, and say nothing. If I can put matters to rights in a quiet way, well and good, I do it; but I don't set people together by the ears. Good-day; I'm going on to Ashley." He took his stick as he spoke and walked up the street at a sharp pace, humming a scrap of an old Scotch song:—

"And when our day shall come, frind John,
We will na meet it sair;
But we'll think on a' the gude we've done,
And could na mak' it mair."

Major Hayne entered Sir Harry's residence through the court-yard, not by the grand entrance; he was fond of announcing himself in the least ostentatious manner. Before he had well closed the gate, however, a sharp salute, in the shape of a snowball, struck him on the cheek. With a few quick strides he seized the delinquent, a lad of five or six years old, who stood staring at what he had done.

"Now, young gentleman," cried the Major, wiping his face, "you and I must settle accounts. What is your name?"

"Master Ashley," answered the boy stolidly. "I didn't go to do it."

The Major looked at him. An extremely light, *colourless* child, with a wide, pug nose and puffy cheeks.

"Gay said there was only one boy," he muttered. "I must have misunderstood him; or this may be a cousin; Arthur's boy, perhaps. Is Sir Harry Ashley your uncle, my boy?"

"Sir Harry Ashley is my papa, sir."

"Well, if you will take me in to him, I won't tell tales: but don't you snowball a stranger again, or you may get punished."

The boy led the Major through the back offices, to the surprise of all the servants they met, upstairs into the library. Sir Harry, wheezing and coughing, was seated in an easy-chair by the large fire; whilst Lady Ashley, in her old, indolent fashion, was stretched back in another, nearly at full length. Nana stood bathing her temples with eau de Cologne, for her ladyship had a headache.

Sir Harry was greatly broken, greatly altered. If anything could arouse him, it was the unexpected sight of his old and dear friend. He struggled to rise, which Lady Ashley did not attempt to do, and Major Hayne drew forward a chair and sat down between them. Presently the boy, who had fetched his sister, came and stood close to the Major.

"This can never be Miss Blanche!" he exclaimed, jokingly, as he took a hand of each. "This is a growing-up young lady. Little Blanche used to kiss me; perhaps the young lady will be above it."

Miss Blanche laughed, shook back her flaxen curls, and inclined her rosy cheek towards the Major.

"This one," playfully whirling round the boy, "and I became friends outside among the snow. But I want to see the other boy."

"There is no other," said Sir Harry. "We have only these two children."

Major Hayne looked puzzled. "Gay told me that the boy born at St. Ouest was living. He through whom I learnt nursing."

"This is he," said Sir Harry.

"This is not he," returned the Major in a positive tone. "What is your name?" he hastily added to the boy. "The other name; not 'Master Ashley,' as you said just now."

"Philip," replied the child.

"Philip!"

"Philip Ashley, sir."

"And 'Ryle,'" interposed the Baronet. "You remember, Major, it was you and I named him Philip Ryle."

"You are mystifying me," exclaimed the Major impatiently. "This is *not* the child I used to nurse at St. Ouest," he continued, turning sharply to Lady Ashley and Nana.

He gazed at both with his searching eyes. The coloured woman's face assumed an expression of terror, and she glanced at her mistress with an entreating, pleading look—as Major Hayne interpreted it.

"When you left the child he was only two months old," spoke Lady Ashley, with cold calmness. "How could you expect to remember him? Nothing changes so much as infants."

"But it is utterly impossible that any infant could change like this," persisted Major Hayne. "He was as dark as yourself, Lady Ashley; nay, darker, with your own large, bright black eyes."

Lady Ashley grew a little, a very little, perturbed. "He was dark in the first few weeks of his life," she said, "but after he had a touch of the fever—the same fever which attacked Sir Harry—the skin peeled off his face and he became fair, as you see him."

"But look at this child's eyes," repeated the Major, who seemed lost in wondering unbelief; "they are small and light; it is not possible they ever could have been a brilliant black, as his were. You are joking with me."

"I have no more to say," haughtily responded Lady Ashley. "There stands the boy, light now, though he may have been as dark as Nana. I have not used white paint to him, and am not answerable for the changing of infants' complexions. Neither do I see what Major Hayne proposes to himself by holding this argument, unless he has a wish to dispute everything I say."

The Major was silent, as of course he had no alternative but to be. But as he turned to speak with Sir Harry on other topics, he caught the strange look of apprehension and distress on the servant's face, shining even through the copper colour.

Sir Harry waited up until nine that night, expecting the usual visit of Mr. Gay; then he was helped to bed. But scarcely had he left the library, which then only contained the Major, when the little man entered it, full of apologies. He had been called out to an earnest case, and could not quit it until that moment.

"Ned," cried Major Hayne, who was thoughtfully looking into the fire, "did you ever hear of black children becoming white?"

"Might boil 'em down, perhaps," answered the surgeon. "*I* never saw it done."

"You remember the child who was being christened the day I arrived here from India, ever so long ago, that little Carnagie? He had jet-black eyes and a swarthy complexion. Should you think such a child as that could ever turn fair, his skin white and his eyes light?"

"Never. So long as oak and ash grow. Why?"

The Major did not answer. When he spoke again, it was on a different subject. "Doctor, I feel sure Sir Harry will not be here twelve months. He is worse than I expected to find him."

"Twelve months!" echoed Surgeon Gay. "Before the half of that time has elapsed, we shall have a Sir Philip Ashley."

"A big boy, that, for his age," carelessly remarked the Major, "especially for one born under his peculiar circumstances. Who do you call him like?"

"Himself, and nobody else," was the reply of the surgeon. "Carnagie was the image of his mother, and the girl is like the Ashleys; but Philip resembles none of them. I told my lady, one day, that had she not been with the boy in France, one might have said he was changed at nurse. Wasn't she angry with me! I had to beg her pardon."

"Sir Harry will see you, sir," said a servant, entering and addressing Surgeon Gay.

When Mr. Gay returned to the room, which he did for a moment before leaving, Major Hayne was in a deep reverie, not having changed his position.

"Major," said the surgeon, touching him to call his attention "you are Sir Harry's oldest friend, and can presume with him more than I can. Try and find out if his worldly affairs are settled: if not, urge it. And persuade him to have further advice: it would be more satisfactory afterwards. He will not listen to me."

Major Hayne aroused himself and looked at the surgeon. "*Afterwards!*" he echoed. "Have you reason to fear that the end is very near?"

"There's a look in his face to-night that I don't like. If I am wanted, Major, I shall be at Mrs. Appleby's. The servants know it. Now for my trudge there in the snow."

"Does it snow still?"

"Flakes as big as a cheese-plate. Good-night."

Major Hayne proceeded to Sir Harry's room. He was in bed,

propped up by pillows, and panting for breath. "Sit here and talk with me, Philip," he said. "I have the most wretched nights. I often wish there was no night."

"Cannot you lie down more comfortably than that?"

"No; on account of my breath. Ah, Philip! a little more painful breathing, the water a little higher, and the world will have seen the last of Hal Ashley. In a few days I shall be two-and-sixty: just the age at which my father died."

"You must have better advice," said Major Hayne. "Had I been here, you should have had it before."

"I had a physician at first, from Stopton, but he did me no good. Not as much as Gay does."

"Gay!" slightingly rejoined the Major, bearing in mind what the little man had just urged upon him, "he may be a knowing apothecary for the village aches and pains, but yours is a serious case. By the way, Sir Harry, have you made your will?"

"No."

"What! not provided for your children—not appointed their guardians!" exclaimed the Major in a tone between astonishment and reproach. "How can you be so careless, Sir Harry?"

"I know I ought to do it. I will one of these fine days, before I get any worse. I am too careless. My sister Bessy used to reproach me with its being my besetting sin."

"We have all a besetting sin," observed Major Hayne. "Never a man, or woman, was sent into this world without one. And we have striven but imperfectly to do our duty, if we have not found it out, and subdued it, long before we arrive at your age or mine."

"Philip, I shall leave you guardian of my children."

"I will not act," hastily interrupted Major Hayne.

Sir Harry stretched out his hand and clasped the Major's. "You *will* act, Philip. Remember our close and long friendship."

The Major hesitated. "Who is to be associated with me?"

"I thought of Arthur Ashley."

"Whew!" ejaculated the Major. "How will that please your wife, Sir Harry? She holds him, I fancy, in little favour."

"He is upright and conscientious: and I wish to leave behind me a token of my confidence in him, and my regard. But if what I hear of his health be true, Arthur may not be long after me."

"In which case, his son must be next to yours in the succession."

"His eldest son. Ryle."

"And if that child of Arthur's should succeed, in his minority, who would reside at Ashley? Your widow?"

"No, no; Ryle. Sir Ryle and his personal guardian, who would, of course, be his mother. I trust in mercy it may never come to that: my wife would not bear to quit Ashley tamely. Why do you suppose so improbable an event? Philip is as strong and healthy as a young lion: there's no fear of his dying."

"How very extraordinary that a dark boy, as he was, should have become so fair!" remarked the Major. "Did you observe the change when Lady Ashley first brought him home, or has it come on by imperceptible degrees?"

"Not by degrees. When she brought him home I was amazed to see the child so changed, for it struck me that when I left him he was a swarthy little chap, something like poor Carnagie. But I thought my memory might play me false, for I was too ill to take much notice of him at St. Ouest, as you know."

There was a silence. Major Hayne broke it, speaking abruptly.

"Sir Harry, you must do justice to Arthur Ashley. You never should have countenanced your wife in her infamous accusation."

Sir Harry groaned. "I was bewildered at the time, Philip; I was, indeed. I have done latterly what I could to repair it, by speaking to my friends and neighbours upon the high estimation in which I hold Arthur."

"Is he well off?"

"He will be better off when I die. It is as much for him, as for anything else, that I ought to make a will."

"You would leave him money?"

Sir Harry indicated an answer in the affirmative, but his breath was growing alarmingly laboured. Major Hayne, unaccustomed to him, imagined it was but a usual occurrence, the effect of his lying down.

"If I am to act, Sir Harry, I must not be fettered by Lady Ashley. She ——"

"Oh, Philip! raise me, raise me up!" almost screamed the Baronet. "I shall suffocate."

The Major quickly passed his arm under the pillows. "Do you feel worse?" he whispered.

"Send for Gay," was the gasping answer.

Later that night, when the snowstorm had ceased and the surgeon sat by the Baronet's bedside, a servant in the Ashley livery might be seen, by the light of the watery moon, speeding along to Stopton in search of a physician as fast as the roads would allow his horse to go.

With the alarm of DEATH, for it was indeed approaching, the pangs of remorse seized upon Sir Harry Ashley. Was there time to repair his dilatory carelessness? Barely. Upon how many death-beds does not the same remorse sit heavily! And, rely upon it, when the interests of this world have been so procrastinated, the same may be feared of those that pertain to the next.

When the physician came, he did not precisely say there was no hope, but he looked it. He remained until the morning and breakfasted with Major Hayne. Her ladyship was not with them. Alarming illness in the house made no change in her habits, and she did not rise until later; she then proceeded to the door of her husband's room. It was fastened, and she knocked sharply. Major Hayne opened it and came out.

"Sir Harry is giving his lawyer directions for his will," he whispered.

"I wish to go in," she said.

"Pardon me, Lady Ashley. They will soon have finished. Sir Harry requested me to keep the room clear until then."

She did not answer a word; she knew she had to deal with as determined a spirit as her own, but she sat down on the seat of one of the corridor windows and looked sullenly out on the snowy landscape. Presently, the lawyer came out, bowed to Major Hayne, bowed lower to Lady Ashley, and passed down the staircase. They both went in then.

"I was bolted out," Lady Ashley resentfully began to her husband.

"My dear—I was telling Graystock—about you and the children—everything," panted Sir Harry. "I ought to have done it before."

"What was there to do?" inquired Lady Ashley, who positively was as ignorant of business matters as her little daughter, Blanche.

"Tell her, Philip," gasped Sir Harry. "I cannot talk."

The Major "told" her to the best of his ability, but he was lost in bewilderment just then, for he had heard a fact which had greatly astonished him—that there had been no marriage settlement upon Lady Ashley. No relatives were near her to urge it, and Sir Harry, in his unpardonable carelessness, had put it off from time to time, until it had been put off altogether. During his courtship he had thought of little save rendering himself agreeable to Miss Carnagie.

"What do you mean about 'guardians?'" interrupted Lady Ashley, as Major Hayne was speaking. "I am competent to take care of my own children."

"Oh, of course, as their mother, but there must be also guardians of their property and interests. It is necessary."

"Who are they to be?"

"Myself and Mr. Ashley."

Lady Ashley's eyes flashed fire. "Who appointed you—and *him?*"

"Sir Harry. No one else has the power?"

Lady Ashley turned to her husband. "Sir Harry, you must undo this; you had no right to take such a step without consulting me. To Major Hayne I object, for I know that we shall but oppose each other. And as to Arthur Ashley," she added, her fingers closing tightly with resolution, "I swear that he shall never have authority over my children."

"Peace, peace, Lauretta," murmured poor Sir Harry. "I have been shamefully unjust to Arthur in the last few years of my life, playing by him the part of a coward. I cannot die until I have repaired it. Do not begrudge what I have bequeathed him, you and Blanche will have enough, and Philip will be far more wealthy, when his minority shall be over, than I have ever been."

Lady Ashley grasped the bedclothes, her fingers, in their passion, nearly meeting. "You have left money to Arthur Ashley!" she exclaimed. "You!"

"Not much. A poor requital for the accusation you cast at him and which I did not repel. Philip," he implored, his tone showing his helplessness, "let me have peace! I must be at peace in this my last day."

"I ask you," persisted Lady Ashley, "will you cancel what you have done? Will you countermand this will?"

"No," was the reply of her husband; "it is a righteous and conscientious will. Ask Major Hayne, he will tell you so."

She turned to Major Hayne. "Is it made? irrevocably made?"

"It is being made. Mr. Graystock will bring it here, by-and-bye, to be signed."

Lady Ashley said no more. In the afternoon, when Mr. Graystock came the second time, Sir Harry was gradually sinking. The lawyer read over the will. The Reverend Mr. Marsh, the incumbent of Ashley, and Squire Prout, who had come to have a last word with his old friend, were called into the room to be the testifying witnesses. Lady Ashley glided in after them, but remained out of view, behind the curtain.

The will was spread out before Sir Henry, who was raised and supported by Major Hayne. He had taken the pen in his hand, when he suddenly looked up.

"Graystock, read that one part of it—relating to Arthur Ashley. It will do me good that my friend Prout should hear it in my presence."

Mr. Graystock read: "And whereas a cruel aspersion was cast upon my dear nephew, Arthur Ashley, to the effect that he had caused the death of my son, I desire in this, my last will and testament, to affirm, of my own knowledge, his entire innocence, and to declare that I have never, for one moment, believed or countenanced the aspersion. And I hereby bequeath to the said Arthur Ashley——"

"That will do," interrupted Sir Harry, motioning for the document to be again placed before him.

He signed the will, the witnesses testifying to his signature. "Thank God," he murmured, sinking back, "that the time to repair my carelessness has been accorded me!"

Mr. Graystock was folding up the paper, when Lady Ashley stole round the bed, and snatched it out of the lawyer's hands. She tore it in two pieces, and thrusting them into the blazing fire, keeping them down with her hands, which must have received a scorching, she turned her dark, determined face towards Sir Harry.

"I told you," she uttered, "that Arthur Ashley should never have power over my children, neither shall he rob them of their money. I would rather tear him in pieces first, as I have torn your fine will."

Sir Harry raised up his hands and groaned aloud, whilst the astonished spectators stood round the bed, and stared in consternation at Lady Ashley. Sir Harry cast an imploring look at Mr. Gray-

stock and at Major Hayne. "You both know my wishes," he gasped: "carry them out."

"The copy of this will is at the inn," quickly spoke up the lawyer. "Shall I fetch it, Sir Harry? Signed, it will be as legal as this."

"Fetch it, fetch it," was the eagerly assenting answer. "It is necessary for her sake, should anything happen to Philip."

Off sprang Mr. Graystock. But before he crossed the threshold of the door a sound recalled him, and he looked back to see Sir Harry in the death-struggle. It was a painful death, but a speedy one. In five minutes all was over.

"Your machinations have not prospered," uttered Lady Ashley, as she gazed in triumph at Major Hayne. "My son is Sir Philip Ashley, and I am uncontrolled."

(To be continued.)

IN THE PAST.

I SANG of sunshine, though my heart
  Held not one single gleam
Of glorious sunlight that with warmth
  Lit mountain, vale and stream;
Of laughing light that chased the clouds
  Across the joyous years—
And none could tell the singer's heart
  And eyes were filled with tears.

I sang of love that only brought
  Glad laughter in its train,
Of happy hours that held with truth
  A clear and glad refrain;
But deeper, clearer, in my heart
  A monotone was shed—
"Old love and new, tried love and true,
  Lie cold, and still, and dead."

How sad, the gladdest tones we hear,
  The eyes that seem most bright,
Should hush in sobs when none are near,
  And bathe in tears by night.
That thro' the clouds, the mist, the rain,
  So far should seem the shore
Where sunlight, laughter, love and hope
  Clasp hands for evermore.

A. E. G.

THE DIAMOND NECKLACE.

MESSRS. Boehmer and Bassange, of Paris, were the king's jewellers, and had long aspired to a fame which should place them at the head of the goldsmiths' guild. In furtherance of their design, they had resolved to make a necklace of diamonds which should surpass, both in beauty of design and value, all the efforts of their rivals. Designs were approved and models constructed. Contemporary prints give us a notion of the glorious beauty of the ornament. Seventeen diamonds of large size formed the first row; six other rows of smaller stones hung from this, whilst, at the back and shoulders, were artistically placed festoons and pendants. Its value was estimated at eighty thousand pounds sterling.

For years M. Boehmer had made fruitless efforts to dispose of this treasure. Crowned heads of Europe at that time had not fortunes to throw away, and thus the necklace remained unsold.

The affairs of the partners were becoming desperate, creditors were importunate, and M. Boehmer determined to drown himself, rather than face the crash which must ensue. He communicated his intention to Marie Antoinette at an interview. She admired the necklace, but could only regret that she was too poor to possess it; her advice was practical: "Take it to pieces, if you can't sell it," she said. This suggestion meant ruin equally with a failure to sell, and the worthy jeweller could but reiterate his intention to kill himself, and withdraw.

The above climax had been reached about the year 1784. M. Boehmer was not long to be troubled with the possession of the diamonds; his troubles were to take a new form; shortly he was to deplore the sale of the necklace. In attendance on Marie Antoinette, at the above meeting, was a Madame de la Motte, who not only admired the diamond necklace but resolved to possess it. She at once commenced a series of far-reaching schemes. Her accomplices, except her husband, were kept as much in the dark respecting her ultimate intentions as her victims.

There was a man soon to arrive at Paris, whom Madame de la Motte had determined to use as her dupe in gaining the coveted treasure. This was the Prince de Rohan, a cardinal of the Roman Church and a man of immense wealth. Some thirteen years before, it had been his duty to receive Marie Antoinette—then the fifteen years' old bride of the Dauphin—into France. From that time the Cardinal had cherished a strong but hopeless passion for the Dauphiness—now Queen. Her majesty was doubtless aware of de Rohan's feeling towards her, for both she and her husband treated him with marked coldness. Even when the Cardinal had brought

the Queen a letter from her mother, Maria Theresa, he could not obtain admission to their presence. The letter was *sent* for, whilst Louis XVI. told him that *he* would be sent for when wanted. But de Rohan did not despair: had not Cagliostro, prince of fortune-tellers, who had him under his influence, predicted that success would attend his love affairs? Perseverance alone was necessary.

Madame de la Motte, who, perhaps through her office near the Queen, had become aware of the Cardinal's feelings, and knowing de Rohan, had determined that he should obtain the diamond necklace for her. Her first step was to assure him that the Queen was not indifferent to his attentions; she produced gilt-edged notes, artful forgeries all of them, but purporting to come from her Majesty. The letters, it may be added, usually gave de Rohan permission to advance Madame de la Motte funds for the Queen's charities. Needless to tell, Madame undertook the distribution of the money, most of which, we regret to say, went to Count de la Motte, a gambler and spendthrift. After a time, a second move was made. A beautiful girl of three-and-twenty, a Mademoiselle D'Oliva, was induced to personate Marie Antoinette; her likeness in face and form to the Queen was notorious. Her duty, so she was told, was to allow a gentleman to kiss her hand in the gardens of Versailles.

Madame de la Motte now took a letter to Prince de Rohan; it conveyed the joyful tidings that the Queen would meet him that night at twelve o'clock in the Gardens of the Trianon. He was delighted. Behold him at midnight cautiously making his way to an arbour under the guidance of Madame. He sees a white figure coming towards him; it is the Queen; he rushes forward, throws himself on his knees; then an alarm is raised. The pseudo queen —D'Oliva—hurries away, first pressing a rose into her adorer's hand. De Rohan is only too eager to escape, and makes his exit from the gardens in a breathless state. No matter; he has the rose and will prize it, name places after it, and perform follies incredible on account of it.

A few days later he receives more letters from the Queen, but no interview is arranged; he becomes impatient, and now Madame arranges her master stroke. The Queen has been disappointed; she admires a necklace which she cannot purchase; if time were given all could be arranged, but her husband is so mean. Could the Cardinal facilitate matters, the Queen would esteem him more highly than at present. De Rohan suggests buying the diamonds as a present; Madame de la Motte does not approve this suggestion; it would not give sufficient time for her manœuvres. She suggests that a contract should be drawn up between De Rohan and M. Boehmer, which should be submitted to Marie Antoinette for her approval. This is done. The terms arranged are that the necklace should be paid for in five instalments, the first to become due six months hence, the others at intervals of three months, the price agreed on, one million

six hundred thousand francs. Above all, the sale to the Queen shall be kept a secret until after the first instalment becomes due. Madame de la Motte again kindly undertakes to act as a go-between and show the contract to her Majesty for approval. This is done, and next day she returns it with these words written in the margin, "Bon, bon, approuvé—Marie Antoinette de France."

Long after it was said that the Cardinal should have known that the words *de France* proved the writing to be a forgery. On the clearest evidence he did not detect the fraud, for shortly after, the necklace was handed to Madame de la Motte for transmission to the Queen. From that moment the jewels, as a necklace, disappear. It was currently thought that the stones were at once removed from their settings and divided amongst the schemers. Madame's husband left Paris for London immediately, and it is said that two jewellers—of New Bond Street and Piccadilly—purchased many thousands of pounds worth of diamonds from him.

At Versailles for some months all is quiet; Madame de la Motte, with matchless effrontery, remains at Court and, from time to time, delivers letters and messages of excuse to de Rohan. The meeting is now never hinted at. At length the first payment becomes due; only one thousand five hundred pounds, the interest, is forthcoming. M. Boehmer is desperate, and thus one day the Cardinal de Rohan finds himself arrested and conveyed to the Bastile, where he is soon joined by Madame de la Motte and Mademoiselle D'Oliva.

The forgeries having become known, the Queen is furious at the part she has unconsciously been made to play. Despite her undoubted innocence, the scandal of the diamond necklace formed one of the charges preferred against her some few years later. The Revolutionary tribunal charged her with having conspired with de la Motte to defraud the jeweller of his property.

Madame, however, tells a different story. Some six months later, when the accused were tried, she affirms that she had entrusted the necklace to Cagliostro, who, she had learnt since, had resolved to ruin the Cardinal by stealing the jewels. Hence Count and Countess Cagliostro join the prisoners. At the trial Cagliostro makes a long speech which convinces everyone that he is a charlatan, but as there is no evidence against him as a thief, he and his countess are acquitted. The Cardinal and the others easily show that they have been the dupes of Madame de la Motte and her husband, who, by the way, has not returned to Paris. They are liberated; Madame is found guilty and sentenced to be whipped and branded with red-hot iron.

Here, as regards the diamond necklace, the curtain falls and some of the actors hurry away from the scene of their labours; others, like Marie Antoinette, prepare to take part in the tragedy which is to follow.

A GUILTY SILENCE.

CHAPTER XV.

A BROKEN-DOWN GENTLEMAN.

WHEN the affairs of Margaret's father had come to such a pass that he found himself compelled to quit England for a time, Mr. Davenant left his daughter, then but eighteen years old, with a distinct promise on his part that he would either return in the course of a few months, when the financial horizon should in some measure have cleared; or, in case such a step were still unadvisable, that he would send her the means wherewith to rejoin him at whatever place on the Continent he might then be residing.

But, apparently, Mr. Davenant did not find it convenient either to come back to, or to send for, the two motherless girls he had left behind him in England; and fourteen long years elapsed before Margaret saw him again. His letters, frequent at first, gradually dwindled down to two a year. They were dated, now from Boulogne, now from Brussels, now from Paris; two or three of them bore the Baden-Baden postmark; and there was one solitary epistle, hardly worth paying postage for, that came to her all the way from Prague.

Then it fell out that after an absence of fourteen years, Mr. Ferdinand Davenant found himself one fine morning on Dover pier, with the sum of three francs in his pocket, and one of them a bad one.

He walked to London and found out Margaret, and subsisted on her for the next six months, at the end of which time he began to see that he really ought to do something for himself. The result of this surprising view of his position was, that by some mysterious means, known only to himself, he obtained and accepted the post of second fiddle in the orchestra of the Wellingford Theatre; for he had always been proud of his violin playing. This happened while Margaret was still living in London; but now that she had come down to Helsingham, which, as everybody knows, is only forty miles from Wellingford, she went over, once every two or three months, to spend a day with the old gentleman and to inquire into his pecuniary affairs; and to-day Trix was going with her.

Mr. Davenant was waiting on the platform of the Wellingford station when the morning train from Helsingham arrived, and he welcomed his daughters with much effusion. Fifteen years had elapsed since he had last seen Beatrice, and he was startled by the resemblance she bore to her mother, as he remembered that mother when he deemed her the fairest vision earth could show; and in that brief instant,

while the thrill caused by the first glimpse of his daughter's face was still upon him, a strange, tangled jumble of recollections passed like a showman's slide across his memory. With a smothered sigh the old man bent to kiss his youngest child, and blessed her in his heart for her mother's sake as he did so.

A very handsome, well-preserved, gentlemanly old Bohemian, this Mr. Ferdinand Davenant, who had devoured his own and his children's substance with such an easy conscience when a young man, and who would have disposed of a second course of the same dish with equal complaisance, had it ever been in his power to do so. He had clear-cut, aquiline features, very similar in outline to those of his elder daughter; his hair was full, white and flowing; and, despite his sixty summers, there was a fresh, apple-ruddiness in his cheeks, which told of an excellent digestion and an iron constitution, which neither care, nor poverty, nor late hours, had been able seriously to impair—a man well filled up, without being corpulent, and with a bearing almost military in its upright freedom.

A proud man and a happy was Ferdinand Davenant that Midsummer morning, as he walked down the main street of Wellingford between his two daughters; and but few of the glances of admiration which their appearance elicited from the passers-by were missed by him.

A few turns down sundry bye-streets brought the three before long to their destination—glad enough, all of them, to get out of the hot, glaring streets. Beatrice could not help feeling chilled and disappointed when she saw the sort of place to which her father had brought her. Margaret was, of course, familiar with it already, and had, in fact, more than once urged her father to remove to a better class of lodging, but in vain. The old gentleman was too comfortable where he was, too much his own master; and Mrs. Rix, his housekeeper, studied his little peculiarities too thoroughly for him to be desirous of a change.

The drawing-room presented a better appearance than Beatrice had been led to expect from what had gone before. It was of considerable size, and could boast of two windows, shaded this morning with clean muslin curtains, which Mrs. Rix had put up at eleven p.m. the previous night. The furniture, although homely and old-fashioned, was clean and well polished; and a certain air of half-elegance was imparted to the room by the entire absence of all tawdry ornaments on the chimney-piece, and vile prints, or worse daubs, on the walls; all such articles found there by Mr. Davenant when he entered on his tenancy having been at once deported by that gentleman, and transferred to Mrs. Rix's own parlour downstairs, where they kept each other company hideously, and were regarded with much complacency by the worthy housekeeper. The only ornament on the chimney-piece was a Bohemian glass vase, filled this morning with fresh flowers; above which hung a large proof-engraving of the

"Storming of Seringapatam," both vase and print being Mr. Davenant's own property.

The table was laid out for breakfast, the place of honour being occupied by a very toothsome-looking Strasbourg pie, which, together with a bottle of light wine and a little fruit when added to the usual English concomitants of the meal, would, in Mr. Davenant's opinion, impart to it an aspect quite Continental, pleasant alike to everyone there.

"And what are you going to make of Mademoiselle Trix?" asked Mr. Davenant of his elder daughter as they sat at breakfast.

"What can I make of her, papa," said Margaret, "but a governess or teacher, like myself? This is the end to which her education has been directed for years past. All of which you know equally with myself."

"Precisely so, my dear," said the old gentleman blandly. "I know that such has been the point you have always had in view. But what says our bonnie birdie? How will a *rôle* so humble satisfy the ambition I think I see in those bright eyes?"

"Oh, papa, you are mistaken! I am not in the least ambitious," said smiling Trix. "I shall like teaching very well — at least, I think so; and if I were only as clever as Margaret is, I should like it much better."

"A poor way of getting a living," said Mr. Davenant in a slightly contemptuous tone. "A very poor way of getting a living."

"Have you anything better to suggest, papa?" asked Margaret, anxiously.

"Yes, I have a suggestion to make—a most excellent suggestion," said Mr. Davenant pompously; "although it is, perhaps, too much to expect that it will meet with your entire approval, Margaret; your ideas, as I know of old, being rather straight-laced and illiberal in such matters. My suggestion is this: that Trix, instead of becoming a miserable drudge of a governess, transfer her youth and her good looks into the theatrical world, and after a proper course of study, make her *début* on the stage."

"On the stage—as an actress! Oh, papa!" and a warm flush mounted into the face of Beatrice.

"Yes, as an actress. Why not, my child? I do not mean as Lady Macbeth, nor even as Juliet; but in the higher walks of genteel comedy, in which there are still plenty of laurels to be had for the plucking. In the character of Lady Teazle, for instance, there is room to achieve a genuine triumph; and even as Miss Hardcastle you might——"

"Papa," said Margaret gravely, interrupting him for once, "you seem to have forgotten that this very question was fully discussed between us only two years ago."

"Was it really, Meg? Then I *have* forgotten all about it. And we decided against it, I suppose?"

"We did, finally and decisively," answered Margaret.

"Ah, then there's nothing more to be said. If you are opposed to it so strongly, the thing is at an end. Since a certain day, ever so many years ago, Meg, when I committed my motherless little Trix into your charge, and left you to fight your own battle and hers too, I have never professed to interfere in the fortunes or destinies of either of my children. I knew that they were in better hands than mine; yes, in better hands than mine—better than mine!" The old man's hands trembled as he lifted his cup to his lips; while Margaret sat pale and pensive, her thoughts wandering, like vague ghosts, through the bitter past.

"I have regretted, not once, but a thousand times," went on Mr. Davenant, after a brief pause, "that I did not cause you yourself, Margaret, to be brought up to the stage when you were a girl. You would have won fame and fortune long ago, and might be keeping your own carriage and living in excellent style now, instead of occupying the humble position you do."

"I am not aware, papa, that I have any particular talent that way," said Margaret.

"You possess nearly every qualification of a great actress," said Mr. Davenant authoritatively. "You have passion, intensity, a fire that smoulders but never dies out, a soul emotional and poetical, an excellent style of elocution and a good stage figure."

"*Mais!* what a catalogue!" exclaimed Margaret, with a little laugh.

When breakfast was over, Mr. Davenant and his daughters adjourned to the homely bit of garden behind the house, so as to afford the old gentleman an opportunity for enjoying his matutinal smoke, for the lack of which, even the society of his daughters would hardly have compensated him. His recollections of his more prosperous days, which the fragrance of the cigar had served to evoke in his memory, formed a fruitful topic, and one on which the old gentleman loved to dilate, as Margaret was well aware; and now that he had settled himself firmly on this hobby, she resigned herself with smiling patience to listen for the next half-hour to his monologue of complaints, and repinings at fortune, and to a vague outburst of chronic discontent at the ill-usage of the world generally. Margaret sat quietly with sympathetic face, interposing a word now and then, judiciously, till the old gentleman had run his subject dry; by which time Trix had grown weary of gathering flowers and forming them into a bouquet, and Margaret herself was pining for a change.

"We will go into the house now, papa, as you have done your cigar," she said. "The sun is becoming rather too powerful here; and I want you to introduce Beatrice to Signor Straduarius."

"The signor is rather out of order this morning, I am afraid," said Mr. Davenant, producing his violin case as soon as they were seated upstairs. "He has lost a string, and wants a general screwing up, so

that if you wish to hear him discourse his best, you must submit to a little preliminary torturing of the old Italian."

Under the skilful hands of his master, the signor soon began to discourse sweetly; for Mr. Davenant was an excellent violinist, a born fiddler, one of those men to whom the fingering of the bow comes like second nature. He had a wider acquaintance than is common in these days with the works of the old Italian *maestri*, and he proceeded, this morning, to play one piece after another from the compositions of authors whose very names were unknown to Beatrice. Suddenly he stopped.

"Trix, my child, I want to hear your voice," he said. "Tell me, what can you sing?"

Beatrice named one or two pieces diffidently, any of which she would gladly sing to please her father. So Mr. Davenant began the accompaniment to one, and Beatrice sang.

"'Tis her mother's voice—an angel's voice!" muttered the old man to himself, after a minute or two; and he closed his eyes, and went on playing softly and tenderly. But he soon forgot where he was, and what he was doing; his mind had gone wandering back into the past; he was listening to that very song, as he had heard it forty years before from lips long silent in the tomb; and when the voice of Beatrice died lingeringly out in the last cadence, the old man opened eyes bewildered and tearful, and seemed for a moment hardly to remember where he was.

Then Beatrice must sing again, and again; and after that, Margaret must sing; and so the morning wore itself pleasantly away, till it was time to set out for the College Green, where the regimental band would play from three till five to-day, and charm with its strains the whole fashionable world of Wellingford there assembled to listen to it.

CHAPTER XVI.

MR. DAVENANT'S LITTLE SURPLUS.

The heat was no longer so intense as it had been earlier in the day, and Mr. Davenant and his daughters had a pleasant walk through the upper part of the town till they reached the Green, where they found a mob of well-dressed people, come to criticise their friends and be themselves criticised, quite as much as to listen to the music.

Although our little party had few to speak to them, there was no lack of glances, some admiring, some depreciatory, all more or less critical, to follow them as they promenaded from one end of the green to the other, or rested for a few minutes on one of the benches under the trees; and many were the whispered inquiries that fluttered about among the company as to who and what the strangers might be. The afternoon was so brilliant, the music so good, and the company so select, that, in their quiet way, both Margaret and Beatrice enjoyed

themselves thoroughly, and felt quite sorry when the last piece was played and the crowd began slowly to disperse.

Mrs. Rix had a comfortable little dinner ready for them on their arrival, over which meal Mr. Davenant fell into one of those fretful and captious moods by no means uncommon with him when he was over fatigued, or had a headache, or was in any way out of sorts.

The old gentleman was evidently pining for his post-prandial pipe, although consideration for the feelings of his daughters kept him from saying so. Margaret, divining from previous experience what it was that made him so fidgety, overruled his faint opposition, and planted him with his pipe and his glass of grog at the open window; where, shaded from outside observers by the muslin curtains, he sat in the balmy summer twilight, listening contentedly to his daughters, while they sang one plaintive ballad after another, or some pleasant home song that might have been composed expressly for such a time.

When Mr. Davenant had come to the end of his second pipe, it was time to close the window and have candles brought in. The most unpleasant part of the day's proceedings remained yet to be gone through; that, namely, connected with an examination of Mr. Davenant's pecuniary affairs. A slight hint from Margaret sufficed to send Beatrice downstairs to cultivate the acquaintance of Mrs. Rix for half an hour; and then Mr. Davenant, with hands that trembled a little, brought out his writing-desk, and laid before Margaret an ominous-looking slip of paper.

"Very dear times, these, my love, very dear times!" murmured Mr. Davenant, as he spread open his schedule before Margaret. "It's wonderful how the money goes: slips through one's fingers like an eel, before one knows what one is about." And the old gentleman stood rubbing his white hands, with a benevolent smile lighting up his handsome face, as though he had just been presenting his daughter with a cheque for a thousand pounds.

Margaret was slightly dismayed when she saw the sum total of the account. It was heavier than it had ever been before, and considerably in excess of what she had calculated upon, being, in fact, within a very few sovereigns of all she possessed in the world. Still, not a syllable of surprise or remonstrance escaped her lips; she counted out the full amount on to the table, and then added to the little pile two out of her few remaining sovereigns, so that the old man might not be without a trifle to keep his pocket with after his debts should be paid; for Margaret never dreamt that a single penny of the money left by her for that laudable purpose was otherwise applied.

"There, papa, dear," she said, with a loving smile, "that will set you straight again with the world for a little while."

He stooped and kissed her tenderly on the forehead as he took the money. An unwonted feeling of compunction touched his heart

for the moment ; but five minutes later he was his buoyant, egotistical self again, conscious of little beyond a feeling of inward gratulation that all those sovereigns, jingling so musically in his pockets, were really and truly his own.

By the time this interesting ceremony was over, it was necessary to prepare for departure. The last train for Helsingham left Wellingford at 9.30 P.M., and the walk up to the station was a long one.

A feeling of loneliness, such as Mr. Davenant had rarely experienced, crept coldly round his heart as he watched the train that carried away his children move slowly out of the station, leaving him, a white-headed old man, standing there friendless and alone. But Mr. Davenant was not a man to allow any sentimental nonsense of that kind, as he would have been the first to call it, to trouble his mind for long ; and, by the time he had left the station three hundred yards behind him, he was busy pondering how he could finish up a pleasant day with most pleasure to himself.

Mr. Davenant and Mrs. Rix held a cabinet council next morning, chiefly for the discussion of matters financial. At this meeting it was decided which accounts should be paid, and which left unpaid ; retrenchment for the future, in various departments, was resolved upon, but never carried into effect ; and when the meeting broke up, Mr. Davenant found himself, to his agreeable surprise, with a surplus of three pounds in hand ; and with several unpaid bills in his desk, the consideration of which did not trouble him in the least.

CHAPTER XVII.

MISS EASTERBROOK'S RETURN.

THE next three weeks sped away quietly and uneventful, but by no means unpleasantly, to the inmates of Irongate House.

Margaret was supremely content in the society of her sister, and in watching the slow but certain progress of that matrimonial scheme round which all her wishes now centred, and to promote which she had so recklessly sacrificed her peace of mind, and much more than that, should the one crime of her life by any mischance ever become known. As days and weeks went on, her conscience began to protest less loudly against the outrage put upon it. She talked to it, and cajoled it, and wheedled it into a sort of sulky silence, that was very far removed, however, from that cheerful innocence, fearing no wrong, in which it had calmly slept so short a time before.

She had not been long in discovering that, in order to facilitate the scheme which her brain had first conceived at the moment that her eyes took in the contents of the Australian letter at the post-office, and which, indeed, supplied the motive power that caused her to act as she did, no further interference on her part would be necessary than to bring her sister and Dr. Randolph together, and that the rest

might safely be left to time and opportunity. Margaret was truly thankful to find that this was so, for she had told herself over and over again, in those first bitter days which followed the suppression of the letter, that, rather than follow up her first downward step with a second one in the same direction, she would prefer to nullify by inaction whatever future advantages might otherwise accrue to her from the deed she had done.

But nothing more was required at her hands, scarcely even the bringing together of hero and heroine. Trix and Hugh came together of their own sweet accord, as it were, and without any action on her part either for or against.

So long as little Dora Morrison, the invalid pupil, remained at Irongate House, and till she was well enough to be sent off to join her friends at Scarborough, Dr. Randolph, at Miss Easterbrook's request, never omitted to visit his child-patient daily; and as Margaret and Beatrice were always at home at that early hour, he never failed to spare a few minutes for their pleasant society, however numerous a round of calls he might still have before him.

But after Dora's departure there would have been no further excuse for his calls at Irongate House; at least not till Miss Easterbrook herself should have returned, who was always glad to see him; when, opportunely or inopportunely, as the case may be, Miss Davenant herself fell sick on the second morning after Dora was gone.

Trix suggested that Dr. Randolph should at once be sent for, but Margaret ridiculed the idea. Later in the day, finding that her sister was growing worse instead of better, Trix dispatched a little note to Dr. Randolph, which brought that active practitioner to Irongate within the hour.

Margaret had no remedy but to submit, and from that date the daily visits were resumed. Even after Margaret had sufficiently recovered to go out, for her attack was only a slight one, by a pleasant little fiction in which all were concerned, although no word respecting it was spoken by any of them, it came to be an understood thing that Margaret was still to be looked upon in the light of an invalid, and that the Doctor's visits were still to be kept up.

Each succeeding visit to Irongate House served but to bind Hugh Randolph more helplessly a captive to the chariot wheels of Love. He was quite aware that he came away each time more deeply enamoured than he had been before; but he pooh-poohed the matter in his own mind. Matrimony was not for him; he had decided against it long ago. It was certainly very pleasant to pass an occasional half-hour in the society of one who in every way charmed him so much as did Beatrice Davenant, and he knew of no absolute reason why he should deny himself that pleasure just at present. But when the proper time should arrive, he would shake off his infatuation, and go about his ordinary avocations heart-whole and fancy free. It was thus that he deluded himself.

There was no absolute reason why he should not marry; indeed, for a doctor to be a married man is in most cases an advantage. But he had been deceived once, cruelly deceived, and he had all but sworn at the time that he would never put it in the power of another woman to treat him in the same way. Although this soreness of feeling had in a great measure worn itself away with time, it had still its effect in causing him to look shyly on matrimony, and to cherish his freedom as a bachelor more warily than he might otherwise have done.

"Why don't you get married, Hugh? Doctors have no business to be single men," Mrs. Sutton, his mother's old friend, said to him one day, speaking with the freedom of one who had known him from the day of his birth.

"Because I've no call that way, aunty," said Hugh with a smile.

"And yet you tell me you have quite got over that first unfortunate attack! And very proper, too; the hussy wasn't worth the bother you made about her. But it's time you took to yourself a wife, and there's many a bonny Helsingham lass would think herself fortunate to get a man like Hugh Randolph for her husband."

"Aunty, you are becoming grossly addicted to flattery."

"Never you mind that, Hugh, but attend to my words."

"Then, you would like to see me married?"

"That I should, right well—providing the girl was one that I liked."

"Ah, just so," said Hugh drily. "There's something in that, certainly."

Margaret took her sister with her to Brook Lodge to see Mrs. Cardale, and that first visit led to others. Then, Mrs. Cardale several times insisted on sending the pony-carriage to Irongate House, so that Miss Davenant might drive out with her sister, and in that pleasant fashion visit some of the romantic nooks of the neighbourhood. Besides these little excursions there were others taken on foot to Briarwood Farm, three miles across the fields, where Miss Davenant was known, and heartily welcomed as often as she chose to go.

In all the farm processes, as carried on at Briarwood, Beatrice took extreme delight. There was the dairy, so cool and spotlessly clean, with its churns, and large, shallow bowls of milk and cream, and its baskets of eggs piled up ready for market. Then, there was an immense orchard to roam in, although the fruit was not yet ripe; but she would not fail to attend some of the apple-shakings in September and October—her half-holidays would give her an opportunity of doing that. Then, there was the milking of the cows, and the feeding of the great brood of poultry; and saunterings in the old-fashioned garden, where roses and gillyflowers, pansies and sweet-williams, honeysuckle and southernwood, grew together in sweet confusion; with unlimited strawberries and cream at sundown, as

you sat under the branching limes just beyond the porch, and watched the marauding rooks, a black cloud, come sailing homeward to their nests in the vicarage copse.

Happy mornings, too, were those spent by the sisters quietly at home, with no society beyond that of each other; when they read or worked or did nothing save talk, as humour or fancy dictated—golden hours tipped with music that charmed themselves all too swiftly away.

Looking back in memory to this time afterwards, it seemed to both of them like the Indian summer of their lives, so sweet while it lasts, and yet lasting such a little while, and following close upon which come the rains and tempests, and bleak, lowering skies of winter.

About a fortnight of the Midsummer holidays had yet to run, and Miss Davenant was sitting alone in her room one afternoon, Trix having gone out with Mrs. Cardale for a drive, when she was startled by the sudden irruption of a cab into the quiet precincts of Irongate House, from which vehicle the bulky person of Miss Easterbrook presently alighted.

Margaret had not expected the worthy schoolmistress till about two days before the commencement of next term; and fearing that illness had brought her home prematurely, she hurried out to meet her. But Miss Easterbrook's usually robust health was apparently unimpaired; and except that she looked dusty and travel-stained, and had a somewhat sour and discontented expression of the mouth and pucker of the eyebrows, foreign to the customary expression of her jolly countenance, she seemed neither stouter nor thinner than before she left home.

A friendly greeting having passed between the two, Miss Easterbrook followed Margaret into the sitting-room of the latter, and depositing herself in a substantial easy-chair, she loosened her bonnet strings, and began to fan herself with her handkerchief.

"I'll never go to Hastings again as long as I live," she exclaimed in a querulous voice. "I've made up my mind on that point. I have encountered nothing but a catalogue of disasters ever since I left home. You remember those three new dresses I took with me? Well, I had not been at Hastings a week before I found that I could not possibly wear any of them till they had been let out; so I sent them to a dressmaker's to be altered, and they came back in a day or two, altered indeed, but in such a style that it was impossible for me ever to wear them as best dresses again. Such dowdy pillow-cases as they had made of them, as though I had no waist at all! It was really grievous. Close on the heels of this disaster came another still worse. My maid, Louisa, actually left me one morning without a word of warning, and went and got married to one of those dreadful coastguard men. An ungrateful hussy! after all I had done for her, and just as she was getting to understand my little

peculiarities. Such clandestine marriages are utterly odious. But it's comforting to think that Louisa will soon find out her mistake, and wish herself back in her old quarters without being able to get there. Well, this was disaster number two, which brings me to number three and Major Styles. By-the-bye, my dear, did I ever mention Major Styles to you before? No, I thought not. I first met him last summer at Hastings, where he was living on half-pay: a handsome man, my dear, with a charming beard; but I will not particularise. He paid me very special attention, and without committing himself to anything definite, he led me to infer, in a hundred little ways, that I was the only woman for whom he had ever really cared. And so we parted, with a sort of tacit agreement that we should meet again this summer, by which time some invisible obstacle would be removed, and there would be nothing to prevent the Major from making a full declaration of his sentiments. Well, we did meet again, and the Major's attentions were most pointed, and I had every reason to expect a declaration in the course of a week or two; not, you know, that I should have felt myself by any means bound to accept him; that would have been a matter for after-consideration. He was only about half his time at Hastings, having to be away two or three days every week on 'business'—a very vague term, my dear, which means anything and everything with men. Well, he had been gone for a longer time than usual, and I was expecting him back that very day, when I received a letter bearing the Lewes post-mark, with what do you think inside?—wedding-cards! Yes, the wretch had actually gone and got married to a rich widow at Lewes, and had had the audacity to send me cards! Words could not describe what I felt. I discovered afterwards that he was a gambler and a *roué*, and was over heads and ears in debt, so that it was really a mercy I escaped him. You may be sure that I did not care to stay any longer at Hastings. I determined to come home, and have the house thoroughly painted and whitewashed, and everything made nice and clean before the pupils' return. And another thing, my dear. I have decided on having a little picnic next week but one—just a quiet dozen, you know—people that will assimilate nicely; and I want you to assist me in making the selection: your tact will be invaluable."

Having thus eased her mind in some measure, Miss Easterbrook sipped the cup of tea which Margaret had had prepared for her, in tolerable comfort, merely shaking her white pudgy finger now and them at an imaginary major, and saying occasionally to Miss Davenant, "A handsome man, my dear, but I won't particularise."

Trix came in, fresh and radiant from her drive, and was introduced to Miss Easterbrook, who shook hands with her and kissed her affectionately, and then subjected her to a more critical examination with the assistance of the double eye-glass of which she made occasional use.

"Far too pretty for the schoolroom," with a shake of the head directed at Margaret; "and with a figure that can be called nothing less than superb: two facts which our Helsingham young gentlemen will not be long in discovering for themselves. Ah! my dear," this to Beatrice, "you will not stay with us long at Irongate House."

Beatrice laughed and blushed. A slight lifting of Miss Davenant's eyebrows intimated to Miss Easterbrook that the topic was one which the elder sister did not care to discuss further.

"You must not heed the nonsense of an old woman like me," said Miss Easterbrook to Trix as she rose, preparatory to leaving the room. "I say and do all manner of odd things in vacation time. But when term commences, you will find me as strict and severe as the great Minerva herself—but without the learning, my dear, without the learning."

And with a nod and a smile the kind-hearted schoolmistress sailed out of the room.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MISS EASTERBROOK'S PICNIC.

THE morning of the day appointed by the worthy mistress of Irongate House for her little festival broke at last, sunny and glorious as a July morning ought to do. I have called it Miss Easterbrook's picnic, and it was hers in this wise, that all the invitations emanated from Irongate House, and the provisions and wines were all provided at her expense. But beyond this she did not go. All who responded to her invitation were expected to find their own vehicles, which in a country-place like Helsingham, was no very difficult matter, those people who had no conveyance of their own being sure to have a good-natured friend who had one and was willing to lend it The locality chosen for the excursion was a place called Spital Woods, about ten miles from Helsingham, on the borders of the next county, and forming, as it were, a line of division between the fruitful, farm-studded, champaign country in which Helsingham is situate, and a much wilder and more picturesque region that stretches northward from that point for nearly thirty miles.

Miss Easterbrook had sent off the provisions and wines, together with an abundant supply of ice, in a covered cart at daybreak; and had also arranged to have an orchestra, numbering six individuals, on the ground at a certain hour. For to Miss Easterbrook, a picnic would have seemed no picnic at all without plenty of music and dancing for the young people, although she herself never ventured on anything beyond a stately set of lancers: but then, a great part of Miss Easterbrook's happiness consisted in doing her best to make others happy.

A knife-and-fork breakfast was laid out at Irongate house for the benefit of all comers; and by eleven o'clock everything was ready for

a start. The party numbered two dozen in all, married and single, and all, with two exceptions, more or less known to each other, an almost inevitable result in a social little town like Helsingham, and one which went far towards promoting the day's enjoyment, there being no ceremonious introductions to be gone through, a freezing process from which English people do not readily recover.

The two exceptions to this rule of mutual acquaintanceship were Mr. Ferdinand Davenant and his youngest daughter. At Miss Easterbrook's request, Margaret had written to invite her father to the picnic; and the old gentleman, having made the journey from Wellingford by the early train, had reached Irongate House just in time to sit down to luncheon with the rest of the party. He was elaborately got up in the airiest and jauntiest of summer costumes; but, although looking much younger than he really was, his natural good taste had kept him from aping a juvenility so extreme as would have made him ridiculous. His white hair was a melancholy fact that could not be overlooked; and he dressed accordingly. Miss Easterbrook was charmed; to her, in particular, did the old Bohemian pay sundry delicate yet gallant attentions, which had about them a flavour far more subtle than had ever tinctured the somewhat coarse assiduities of that hateful Major Styles. Then, again, from the moment of her introduction to Mr. Davenant, whom she had never previously met, the worthy schoolmistress felt herself relieved from all further care and anxiety on the score of the success of her little party. In some way, which probably neither she nor anyone there could have explained, the last comer seemed to float naturally to the helm of affairs, and to be kept there by common acclaim for the rest of the day. A brief, but easy dictatorship! the advantages connected with which the hero of the hour knew how to improve to the utmost; for before his return home in the evening, "that charming Mr. Davenant" had secured three invitations to the houses of three of the wealthiest people at the picnic, all of which he meant to bear fruit at some future date.

One individual there was, beyond the Irongate party proper, to whom the reader has been already introduced, Dr. Hugh Randolph to wit, who had found or made leisure enough, amid the duties of a busy life, to claim the indulgence of a well-earned holiday; more especially as such indulgence chimed in with his own private inclinations. Sweet Trix and he would be together—that was all he cared or thought about: let results take care of themselves.

The tract of country known as Spital Woods was some miles in extent; but the particular part of it for which our party was bound, was a lovely valley that went by the name of Blackthorn Vale. At the entrance to this vale was a country tavern, having extensive stable accommodation, where excursionists generally left their horses and conveyances, and went forward on foot, for the place was much frequented during the summer months. The lower end of the valley

was shut in by a lofty hill, known as Cloud Top, from the summit of which there was a magnificent view over four counties. To get into the Vale proper, you had to make a *détour* of a mile round the base of this hill; you could do it on donkey-back if you felt so disposed, or else make a bee-line from the tavern right across its summit—a feat requiring wind, muscle and endurance.

On the present occasion, several youthful members of the party made it a point of honour to climb Cloud Top. Not that many of them seemed to care greatly for the view when they had struggled to the summit, but preferred employing themselves in waving their handkerchiefs, in shouting to their pigmy friends in the valley, and in discussing sundry bottles of Bass, with which one noble-hearted individual had laden himself at the tavern and had dragged safely to the top for the benefit of his friends. Three cheers having been awarded to this benefactor by his grateful countrymen, it was unanimously voted great fun to set the empty bottles rolling down the steep sides of the hill, in the direction of the party below, with various eccentric messages written on scraps of paper, and tied round their necks; after which the scapegraces began to think of dinner, and to wonder whether they could possibly reach the bottom in safety. This feat being at length accomplished, the reunited party sauntered slowly along the valley, following a footpath that wound pleasantly in and out by the side of the shallow stream that traversed Blackthorn Vale from end to end and added not a little to its beauty. After a time, they came to a charming little glade, carpeted with freshest turf, which had been fixed on as the spot for luncheon; and where—welcome sight!—they found Miss Easterbrook's well-filled hampers awaiting their arrival. A snowy cloth was quickly spread, round which the company seated themselves—some on the grass, some on convenient boulders, and some on the gnarled roots of two huge oaks, whose branches made a pleasant shelter from the heat of the July sun.

Beyond the man in charge of the hampers, there were no waiters present. So Mr. Davenant at once installed himself in the double post of *chef* and butler, and having enlisted one or two unattached young gentlemen to serve under him, he proceeded to wait upon the company.

"Pray think of yourself, Mr. Davenant. You are spoiling us all with your attentions," said Miss Easterbrook anxiously, as the old Bohemian bent over her to replenish her glass. Then she added in a lower voice, "See, I have reserved a space for you here, next myself. If you do not come soon, I shall think that my company is not agreeable to you."

Mr. Davenant's eyebrows were lifted slightly, and he bent still lower as he answered: "Madam, I appreciate the honour, and will avail myself of it presently. Meanwhile, let me assist you to a little more of this *pâté;* it is the best thing going. Those youngsters

manipulate that wine as though it were so much bitter beer. I must give them a lesson."

In spite of her mental disquietude, Margaret could not help being amused at finding that she, too, had an ardent admirer in the person of the Rev. Titus Plock, a curate of immature years, and a recent arrival in Helsingham. It so fell out that Margaret and this gentleman were placed side by side in the wagonette, and a limited liability conversation thereupon sprang up between them; for the day was still in its teens, and the genial influence of Veuve Clicquot had not as yet been brought to bear on the shy young curate. To all the tepid platitudes of the Rev. Titus, as they journeyed side by side, Margaret responded with a mild show of interest, and was inwardly grateful that her companion was so easily satisfied; so that while murmuring a reply to his gentle inanities, her mind was still, in a great measure, free to follow out its own more sombre train of thought.

When dinner was over, the gentlemen claimed the indulgence of a post-prandial smoke, while the ladies bathed their hands and faces in the stream hard by; after which, a dance was unanimously called for, and three sets of quadrilles were quickly formed. Beatrice and Hugh danced together, the opposite couple being Miss Easterbrook and Mr. Davenant, who footed it as nimbly as the youngest there. After the quadrille came a schottische, and then a waltz; but both to Miss Easterbrook and her cavalier it seemed wiser to retire to the grateful shade of some adjacent trees, and there subside into spectators of the merry scene.

CHAPTER XIX.

WINSTANLEY'S CAVE.

By-and-bye the ladies began to cry out for a cup of tea. A couple of crones were in attendance, by whom a fire of brambles and dried branches was quickly lighted. Immense teapots of block tin, and a service of the commonest ware, together with a quantity of delicious cream, were also provided by these ancient dames, Miss Easterbrook's stores being called upon for all other requisites; and the ladies were soon supplied with a cup of their favourite beverage, the rude style in which it was served merely enhancing their enjoyment of it. A few gentlemen of domestic tastes, to whom a cup of tea was almost a vital necessity, kept the ladies company. Others, less wise, formed a little clique of their own, and set to work smoking as hard as they could, as if to make up for lost time; and more bottles were opened, and reticent tongues were loosened, and each one became impressed with the belief that he had a special faculty for saying "good things." They were rejoined by the ladies before the fun grew uproarious; and after some discussion, the majority of the party decided to have the

carriages got out and to drive over to Vance Priory—a picturesque ruin some four or five miles away. A few there were, however, who preferred staying and exploring further the beauties of Blackthorn Vale; and there were even one or two old fogies who decided in favour of the tavern parlour, as against the combined attractions of valley and ruin. So the party separated, with the understanding that all should meet again at the tavern at eight o'clock, and journey home together.

Miss Davenant and her sister, having visited Vance Priory only a fortnight previously, did not care to go there again so soon afterwards; besides which, there was a cavern and a waterfall at the upper end of the vale, which Dr. Randolph pronounced worthy of a visit; and a little quiet ramble, away from the rest of the party, was by no means undesirable. So our two sisters, escorted by Dr. Randolph and the Rev. Titus Plock, set out by themselves (Miss Easterbrook and Mr. Davenant had gone to the Priory), taking the footpath that led towards the head of the valley, the Doctor, as knowing the way, going first with Trix. Margaret, slipping her little gloved hand within the arm of Mr. Plock, at once plunged with that gentleman into an animated discussion on the merits and demerits of Church decoration; and whether it arose from this, or from some other cause, it so fell out that the distance between the two couples imperceptibly widened; and when, after a short time, the road became more rugged and winding, the Doctor and Beatrice passed out of sight altogether, while Margaret and Mr. Plock seemed only to dawdle more and more. A sudden turn of the road disclosed to view a prettier effect of nature and art combined than any they had yet seen.

"What a charming subject for a pencil sketch!" said Margaret involuntarily.

"I have your sketch-book here," said Mr. Plock with animation: and so he had. Margaret might have foreseen such an eventuality as the present one. "Do, pray, try your hand at it, Miss Davenant. I know that it would come out charmingly under your pencil."

"Tempt me not," said Margaret. "I could never do justice to so picturesque a morsel."

"Oh yes, you could," replied the confident Mr. Plock. "Do, please, try." And he found her a smooth little knoll on which to sit, and opened her book for her, and gazed into her face with the look of a pleading spaniel, so that Margaret had no choice but to comply.

"Dr. Randolph and my sister will think that we are lost."

"We can easily overtake them," said the amorous curate. "A few minutes more or less will make no difference."

So Margaret set to work on the ruined water-mill, while Mr. Plock lounged at her feet, asking no greater happiness than to be near her.

Hugh Randolph and Beatrice Davenant walked slowly forward towards the head of the valley, looking back occasionally for Margaret and the curate, and when they were no longer visible, con-

cluding that they were merely hidden by a turn of the road, and would be at the waterfall almost as soon as themselves. The westering sun shone full and bright into the little valley, but far away to the north-east, over Red Coombe and Banksipp and the lesser hills, dark, threatening clouds had long been gathered, and were now slowly advancing across the sky as the sun went down. But all this was shut out from the view of Hugh and Beatrice by the narrow walls of the valley. They saw only the afternoon sunshine, and the full flush of summer foliage, and the shimmer of water between the trees; they heard only the rustle of wind-stirred leaves, and now and then the glad note of some happy bird—music less sweet to them than that of their own hearts.

The footpath they were traversing divided itself into two parts as it neared the head of the valley, one path sweeping steeply up the hill-side, and bringing you out on a level with the top of the waterfall, and leading you thence away into the wild, hilly country beyond. The lower path still keeping along the bottom of the ravine, ceased abruptly, after a time, on a small rocky ledge facing the great grey cliff which shut in the head of Blackthorn Vale, over the summit of which the stream they had been tracking kept pouring itself for ever, looking now, when the sun shone on it, like a flashing veil of liquid silver.

"It is very beautiful, and worth coming three times the distance to see," said Beatrice, as she and Hugh stood on the ledge of rock, right in front of the cliff; "but in winter it must be magnificent."

"It is the force of the stream in winter," said Hugh, "that has worn this basin in the rock just at our feet. It always looks black and sullen, and is said to be very deep."

"But where is the cave of which you spoke? and why is it called Winstanley's cave?"

"Look steadily through the waterfall, keeping you eyes on a level with the ledge on which we are now standing, and you will see that the cliff looks darker in that place than in any other."

"I see the place of which you speak."

"That is the entrance to the cavern. It is said to derive its name from the fact that a certain Colonel Winstanley, of the Royalist army, lay hidden in it for three months after the battle of Worcester, and was supplied all that time with food by the simple country folk, who never betrayed his secret; and that he afterwards got away in safety to France."

"Quite a little romance, is it not," said Beatrice. "I suppose the next thing to do is to cross this very insecure-looking bridge, and that in some way or other, though I confess I don't exactly see how, we shall ultimately find ourselves in the cavern."

"If you have sufficient courage to follow me across the bridge, you will soon find out the way into the cave."

"But I should like Margaret and Mr. Plock to be with us. How

foolish of them to linger so far behind! And see what a black cloud has made its appearance just over the waterfall. We are going to have a storm."

"A summer shower — nothing more, I think," said the Doctor. "But we had better, perhaps, make our way into the cave without further delay, so that we may, if possible, get back to the tavern before the rain comes on. Have you courage enough to follow me across the bridge?"

For a moment Beatrice hesitated. Margaret's absence made her vaguely uneasy; and now that the time for being put to the proof had come, the exploration of the cave seemed an adventure full of peril, and one to which her nerves were by no means equal. But looking up, she saw Hugh Randolph standing halfway across the plank, with his hand outstretched and his frank eyes bent inquiringly on her, and she felt ashamed of her timidity.

"Go on, I will follow you," she said, with a brave attempt at a smile, waving aside his proferred aid. Next moment with a light, swift step she crossed the frail structure, and stood by his side on the opposite ledge of rock, and only a few feet removed from the waterfall. Above them towered the grey cliff, almost as steep as the side of a house. Below them was the black basin of which Hugh had spoken; and as they stood on their narrow platform, they looked straight down the vale to the point where it turned suddenly away to the left. They saw its sides, densely clothed with brushwood and young timber, and, for some distance, the path by which they had come; saw, too, the little Blackthorn river rippling gently away among its rushes and water-flags, and looking as though the "tremendous header" it had just taken over the cliff were quite beyond the range of its capabilities.

A walk of a few feet along the ledge brought the Doctor and his companion to the cave, which was merely an opening of considerable size in the face of the cliff; the only singular feature about it being that it was directly behind the waterfall, so that in the wet season, when there had been much rain among the hills, the water, as it fell, formed a curtain wide enough to hide the entrance completely from anyone standing in the valley, and, indeed, precluded all access to the cave, except at the expense of some danger and a certain wetting. But now, after so many weeks of dry weather, it was reached easily enough, without even the risk of a single drop of spray to spoil the most delicate of summer attire.

The effect was certainly a very pretty one, and so Trix acknowledged to herself as she sat on a large stone just within the entrance, and saw the liquid veil unrolling itself before her, even as it had unrolled itself long years ago before the eyes of the Royalist Colonel, when he lay hidden there, week after week, with nothing to do but watch it. How was it that it did not drive him mad? Or did he come at last to love it, so that in after time, when safe from his

enemies on a foreign shore, its voice often made the music of his dreams? The effect was more than pretty—it was poetical, with something melancholy just hinted at behind that free, joyous rush of water; for Nature is a cunning artist, and into her brightest tapestry never forgets to inweave a neutral thread, and her gayest music has ever an undertone of sadness for such as have ears to hear.

Hugh had brought a couple of tapers in his pocket, which he now lighted; and this done, he and Trix proceeded to explore the cave, which, however, contained nothing worthy of special notice. There was a recess in one corner, with a narrow orifice at the back of it, known as "Winstanley's fireplace and chimney," the opening of the latter, so ran the tradition, being some hundreds of yards away up the summit of the cliff. Then there was a smaller cavern which opened out of the larger one, known as "Winstanley's bedroom," and a very doleful place it looked. What else there might be they had no opportunity of ascertaining, for a slip of the Doctor's foot caused him to stumble, and extinguished both his tapers; and with a merry laugh at the mishap, they hurried back to the entrance, glad to greet the cheerful daylight again.

But it was by no means so cheerful now as it had been only ten minutes ago. The sunshine was entirely gone, and the sky was hidden by black clouds; and just as our two explorers stepped from behind the waterfall on to the outer ledge of rock, the storm swept suddenly down from the hills with a rush and fury of wind and rain that almost took away their breath, and drove them back, half blinded, to seek the shelter of the cave.

"What shall we do?" asked Beatrice, white and terrified.

"We can do nothing but wait here till the rain is over," said Hugh. "These summer storms seldom last long. The worst of the matter is, that we shall have a wet walk back to the tavern, and you are hardly equipped for bad weather."

"I should not care so much about myself, if I only felt sure that Margaret had found shelter somewhere."

"I think you need hardly fear on that score," answered Hugh. "If your sister and Mr. Plock had not seen the storm coming on, and hastened back towards the tavern, they would have been here a quarter of an hour ago. Miss Davenant is securely sheltered somewhere, I have no doubt."

"I am glad you think so," answered Trix. "See how much heavier and wider the waterfall has become during the last ten minutes. There must have been much rain among the hills."

"I wish it had stayed among the hills," responded Hugh. "You are likely to have the 'magnificent effect' you talked about a little while ago, without waiting for winter to bring it."

"Only I happen to be on the wrong side of the curtain at present to admire it properly. Is the weather no better?"

"By Jove, no! It comes down as heavily as ever," said the doctor after a glance outside; and it's astonishing where all the wind has sprung from so suddenly."

The words had hardly passed Dr. Randolph's lips when cave, waterfall and valley were illumined for an instant by a vivid flash of lightning, followed next moment by a long, rattling crash of thunder, which multiplied itself again and again among the hills, till finally it died in faintest echoes far away.

"Forked, and the thunder just over our heads," muttered Hugh to himself.

Beatrice, like many other people whose nerves are no worse than those of their neighbours, had a great dread of thunder. She was sitting just within the entrance, and Hugh was standing beside her, when that terrible flash came which seemed to split the sky in twain; and acting on the impulse of the moment, she started up with a little smothered cry, and laid her hand appealingly on her companion's arm. His heart thrilled to the touch. How beautiful she looked as she stood thus in the dim twilight of the cave! Had a sculptor been present at that moment he might have caught an inspiration for an exquisite personation of alarm. Hugh took the little hand tenderly in his, and placed it within his arm. "Do not be afraid," he said. "There is far less danger here than there would be out in the valley. Try to look on it in the light of a spectacle, and you will find it little less than sublime. Consider—we may never have the good fortune to be so highly favoured again."

Another flash, and another burst of thunder, but further away this time. The storm was evidently leaving them as suddenly as it had come, and so Hugh reassuringly told his companion.

"How terribly frightened I should have been had I been here alone!" said Trix. "But your presence seems to give me courage and comfort, I cannot tell how."

"It was a girl's frank confession, coming direct from the heart without thought of after consequences.

"Oh, Beatrice, why not give me the right to comfort and protect you through life!" said Hugh, looking into her face with eyes whose passionate meaning could not be mistaken. "For I love you far better than all else the world holds, have loved you from the first moment I saw you, and I can keep back the knowledge no longer. I said to myself, 'I will not tell her; why should I ask her to share her bright young life with mine, so dull and commonplace?' But love is selfish, impetuous, and will not be held by the cold bonds of prudence, and bids me confess everything and trust to your goodness to be forgiven. Yes—I love you! But now I have frightened you, I see it by your eyes. But I cannot draw back from what I have said; nay, I would not draw back for anything that could be offered me, even should I never succeed in winning you for my own. But you will let me win you for my own, will you not? I am like the

commander of a forlorn hope: I dare not despair, for to do so implies failure, and to me failure means the loss of everything that can make life dear and beautiful. Do not, then, cast me from you utterly, but give me some hope, however faint, that I may one day call you my own, my wife!"

What was Beatrice to say in answer to this appeal, the truth and earnestness of which could not be doubted? She was certainly surprised, and, perhaps, a wee bit frightened—the sensation of being loved was so new and overpowering—yet not altogether displeased. What woman, "walking in maiden meditation, fancy free," ever is displeased the first time such a confession is murmured in her ear, especially when he who tells the tale is one whom she is already predisposed to like and admire? Her hand had fluttered away from his protection at the first word spoken by him; her heart beat wildly; the colour in her cheeks came and went; and, worse than all else, her tongue seemed frozen and unable to find words to express more than a tithe of what she felt. Ah, if she had not been quite so unsophisticated and unworldly, if only she had had the experience of some young ladies, how neatly she might have turned the Doctor's declaration into a happy jest, and have sentenced him with a smile. Or else skilfully played him up stream and down, now that he was safely hooked, and have tortured him delicately after the most approved fashion; till, tired of the sport, she either landed him high and dry, and claimed him as her own, or else, in utter indifference, let him go, maimed for the rest of his life. If Beatrice Davenant had only been one of these skilful fishers of men, what a much more entertaining history this might have been made! But being a quite different sort of young person, she took the matter en grand sérieux, and the historian has no course left open save to report verbatim the words made use of by her on the occasion in question.

"You ask a great deal of me, Dr. Randolph," she said at length, and there was no hesitation in that low, clear voice when once she began to speak; "more, perhaps, than I can give to anyone, just at present. Your words have taken me by surprise, for I had learned to look on you as a valued friend, and never thought to find you anything either more or less." (Was that statement quite ingenuous, Trix?) "What am I to say to you? I am lost for words to express all that I feel. What I wish to convey is this, and pardon me for expressing it so rudely, that having, as I have already said, looked upon you during the short time that I have known you, entirely in the light of a friend, I am not prepared just yet, and at so short a notice, to regard you in any other character. You must give me time to get over the strangeness of this new feeling, time for me to consult with my sister; for I cannot decide so important a question on the impulse of a moment; and I am far from certain that I can ever decide it as you wish. "No," she said, in answer to an appealing look, "I will not consider myself as bound by a promise of even

the faintest kind. I feel and appreciate the honour you have done me, and more than that I will not say at present. To-day is Tuesday; on or before Saturday you shall have my final decision." Then holding out her hand with a frank smile, she added: "And now, let us forget all this foolishness for a time, and finish the day as we began it, pleasantly, as friends and nothing more. Is it a bargain?"

Hugh took the proffered hand and pressed it gently to his lips. "A bargain let it be," he said.

"And now, sir, suppose you go and look after the weather. I believe we shall have a fine evening after all. This cataract is really becoming magnificent now that we are about leaving it."

The rain was over, and blue patches of sky were visible here and there, as Beatrice and Hugh took their way along the valley. Halfway, much to the relief of Trix, they encountered Margaret and Mr. Plock, who had found a secure shelter from the storm among the ruins of the watermill which they had lingered to sketch.

(*To be continued.*)

TWO LIVES.

A VIOLET opening from the bud,
All in a little world of green;
With fragrance sweet,
With beauty meet,
Under its leafy screen.

The sun was high and bright and fair,
But oh, the cloud that lay between!
A cloud that past
In mist at last,
And then the light was seen.

Sweet flower that rose to meet the sun,
Strong sun that gave it life: I ween
They had their hour,
Glad sun and flower,
When all the world was green.

GEORGE COTTERELL.

IN THE LOTUS-LAND.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "Letters from Majorca," "The Bretons at Home," etc., etc.

THE history of Alexandria is not less wonderful than that of Egypt. Whilst forming a part of the latter, it is essentially distinct and separate from our Lotus-Land; just as the history of Rome was separate from that of Italy.

The city founded by the great Macedonian reached a point of grandeur and magnificence to which perhaps only "the eternal city" could offer a parallel. As the eyes of all the world were once directed towards Rome, so in like manner were they at one time turned upon Alexandria. And the latter possessed a distinction denied to Rome: she was commercially as well as intellectually great; not only pre-eminent in warfare, in learning, in the arts and sciences, but in the amazing wealth that flowed to her in a thousand channels from her traffic with other countries. In the days of Cleopatra and Antony, her riches seemed inexhaustible. Like a well supplied by an unseen spring, the more they drew for their lavish expenditure and excesses the heavier became their coffers, as if the very demand created the supply. Nothing was too costly for their pleasures. Cleopatra by dissolving pearls made her draughts more precious, and washed her hands in spices, each mixture of which represented a costly sum and evaporated almost as it was used. Thousands of roses decked their

daily feasts, and vessels of gold and silver were accounted as nothing worth.

But not for these sinful and voluptuous ends was Alexandria created, and for long she worthily fulfilled the high destiny marked out for her by Alexander the Great.

It was in the year 332 that Alexander came down upon the coast, flushed with victory and fast approaching that period of his existence when he was to sigh for fresh worlds to conquer. He had subdued Syria, and, advancing upon Egypt, had taken Memphis, the capital during the Persian dynasty, and made himself master of the whole country. With Alexander Egypt entered upon its Macedonian period, which in turn was soon to yield to the Greek under the Ptolemies.

He had decided to make a pilgrimage to the temple of Jupiter Ammon, in the African desert, and for that purpose had gone down the Nile. Struck with the deficiency of the African coast in a harbour of refuge, it had also occurred to him that this region was very favourably placed for trade. Steering westward from Canopus, he was attracted by the situation of the Island of Pharos, which formed a natural harbour in conjunction with the mainland: something after the manner—to admit a modern comparison—of the harbour of Lerwick, in the Shetland Islands, which is formed by the Island of Bressay and the mainland, has two entrances like that of Alexandria, and is large enough to give refuge to a whole fleet of war ships.

Before that eventful voyage of Alexander, this particular part of the coast was nothing but a flat, low-lying, deserted shore, protected from the fury of the Mediterranean storms by the Island of Pharos. On either side of the island the land stretched out like a promontory, and the island itself rose up in oblong form as a protecting rampart.

Alexander at once saw the possibilities of the situation. Here he would found a city which should bear his name, commemorate his conquest of Egypt, and become great, if not greatest, amongst the cities of the world. Here the Nile ended its long course through the country. On the north the shores were washed by the Mediterranean, on the south by Lake Mareotis. No finer site could exist for his purpose. It would command the trade of the world; and the surrounding plains would be fertilised by irrigation and the overflowing of the river.

Tradition has it that Alexander's views were further strengthened by a dream or vision, in which an old man appeared to him, and declared that he was to found him a city that should bear down his name to posterity, and should be outshone only by the glory of his fame as a conqueror. The situation was described as follows, in the words of Homer, somewhat freely translated:

> "One of the islands lies in the turbulent waves of the sea,
> Opposite Egypt's river, and *Pharos* its name shall be."

The site was accordingly chosen, and the plans were drawn out by Dynocrates, the king's chief architect. White earth was used for

marking out the principal buildings and thoroughfares; and when this ran short, white flour or grain supplied its place. This brought down numbers of birds upon the field, who devoured the grain and then flew away. Alexander, looking upon this as a happy omen, prophesied that the city would become greatest amongst the cities of the world: a prophecy not fulfilled in his time, for Alexandria only reached completion in the days of Ptolemy Philadelphus.

Very soon a magnificent city arose upon the desert coast. It grew in wealth and reputation. The eyes of the known world were directed towards Alexandria. Commerce flowed into her ports. She became the intellectual and commercial capital of the East. She encouraged learning, and rallied round her and welcomed all the great men who, attracted by her splendour and renown, flocked to her shores. Her buildings and palaces were countless and magnificent, her temples unequalled.

Alas! no traces of Ancient Alexandria have come down to us. There are no ruins remaining, as there are of so many other cities of the Nile. Of Ancient Alexandria it may be said, as was prophesied of Jerusalem, that not one stone is left upon another. Pompey's Pillar, it is true, still rears its lofty head; but this is nothing more than the solitary fragment of a building that, in point of splendour, almost eclipsed the Roman Capitol—the Alexandrian Serapeum: if, indeed, Pompey's Pillar really formed one of the supports of that wonderful temple.

The very tomb of Alexander is no longer to be found. The tombs of the kings were near their palace and the Temple of Cæsar, on the left of the harbour. This was the *Bruchium*, or fashionable part of the city, and the most magnificent. Here were the palaces with their matchless gardens; and here the finest buildings founded by the Dynasty of the Lagidæ—the famous Museum, the amphitheatre, where all games were held. Admission to the games was by means of ivory tickets, as in our own day to the subscribers of the Opera, our Botanical Gardens, and so on; and as history repeats itself, it is possible that the same answer may occasionally have been given that was once given to us, on one day meeting a newly-made widow, and asking her whither she had been in her bereavement. "*To sell her husband's bones*," was the amazing reply. Then, noticing a startled expression, she explained that the "bones" were nothing more than the ivories of the Botanical Gardens, of which he had been a perpetual member or proprietor.

The Egyptians buried their dead in the west. All their cemeteries, their "City of the Dead," lay on the western side, following the course of the setting sun, looking towards the great deserts; all typical of death and *the end*. The realms of death were supposed to lie beyond the deserts. The catacombs of Alexandria still exist, and many a tomb may yet be seen hewn out of the great rocks lying westward. Only the Christians of later ages bury towards the east

THE HARBOUR, ANCIENT ALEXANDRIA.

and the rising sun, looking upon death merely as the gate by which they pass to everlasting life. The Egyptians, as we know, embalmed their dead, but the Greeks adopted the heathenish system of cremation.

Their thoroughfares were broad and handsome. The Jews occupied the eastern side of the Bruchium, and at times were rich and flourishing, at others brought trouble and misery upon themselves by their own conduct. The longest thoroughfare stretched from the Jews' quarters to the City of the Dead, ending at the Canoptic or Rosetta Gate. The other gates—the Gates of the Sun and the Moon—have disappeared, and can only be traced by history or tradition. The thoroughfares were broad and paved, the chief one being about one hundred and thirty-six feet wide. Trees were planted on either hand; and the side paths were overarched by magnificent arcades, which gave shelter alike from the wind and rain and the tropical mid-day sun.

Down this splendid thoroughfare all their processions passed, and on their feast days—such as the Festival of Adonis—the sight must have been a gorgeous Eastern pageant, rivalling all the splendid pageants of Rome, which we of a later and less mighty day and generation can only faintly imagine. In the Bruchium, we have said, were all the finest buildings of Alexandria; the Serapeum, their incomparable Greek Temples, their Museum, their costly palaces and their tombs, where the kings rested after an existence which, to many of them, was essentially "life's fitful fever." For all were not as wise as Ptolemy Soter, who, lavishing great wealth upon the public, was frugal in his own tastes and desires, declaring that a king should be munificent to others, moderate towards himself.

Amidst a grove of trees where the declining sun cast long shadows athwart the artificial mound of Sôma, was the tomb of Alexander the Great.

It was a small edifice and contained the sarcophagus of the great conqueror. The Sôma was also the burial place of the Ptolemies, but the chief honour was bestowed upon the body of Alexander. He had died in Babylon but his body, transported to Egypt in a golden sarcophagus, was kept at Memphis until his tomb was ready. This was held in great veneration by the Moslems. Latu, one of the Lagidæ, melted down the golden sarcophaghus and placed the body in one of alabaster. Another sarcophagus, said to have been that of Alexander, is now in the British Museum, but as the inscriptions prove it to have belonged to one of the Pharaohs this is evidently impossible.

The Sôma has disappeared with other traces of ancient Alexandria, but a tomb, answering to the description of the Conqueror's, was found amidst the mounds of the old city. It resembled a shiekh's tomb; but, if Strabo's account is to be trusted, its position does not agree with the site of the ancient Sôma. The sarcophagus which

was supposed to be his tomb was taken by the French before it found its resting place in the British Museum. Alexander's real tomb is probably still reposing in some undiscovered spot under the clear skies of Egypt and within sound of the plashing waves of the Mediterranean; or, more probably still, has disappeared as completely as ancient Alexandria itself.

No city ever rose so rapidly or reached its meridian of splendour in so short a time. No wonder that all the known world flocked to its shores. Strangers were well received, and its name grew famous for hospitality. Syracusans especially became a portion of the settled population, and the Syracusan ladies were celebrated for their beauty, wit and extravagance, although they belonged more to the commercial than the noble element of the city. But there were merchant princes in those days who held more power and influence in their grasp than they do even in these, and their wives were leaders of fashion. Human nature repeats itself quite as much as history is said to do so: and the rivalries of different sets, the jealousies, the strivings for precedence, the anxieties to rise to the highest point of wealth, or rank, or fashion, the domestic differences between husband and wife, the intrigues of the fair and faithless: all this existed then as now. A few vivid pictures have been handed down to us in the pages of Theocritus, which prove how wonderfully human nature has been composed of the same fundamental principles in all ages; and that, given the same conditions and surroundings, we of to-day should act and think exactly as did the Alexandrians and Syracusans of two thousand years ago.

It must have been a wonderful sight, that fashionable throng flocking to the Bruchium on the feast days. The Festival of Adonis appealed to the ladies, that of Dionysus to the men. At the former, everyone of note and consideration was invited to the king's palace. From the high street the people had to mount the citizens' steps, for the road leading from the palace through the Bruchium to the lower parts of the town was only used by royalty. It was in allusion to this law that Euclid gave his famous reply to Ptolemy Soter, which has ever since passed into a proverb: "There is no royal road to mathematics."

Up to a certain rank the ladies, on the festival days, were only allowed to enter the vestibule of the palace. This was gorgeously decorated with draperies, flowers and statues. A "feast of roses" scented the air to the point of faintness, for they faded quickly in the heated atmosphere. Fountains perfumed with the spices of Arabia, plashed coolly in the open courts. In the centre, magnificently draped and almost buried in rose leaves and silver, reposed the statue of Adonis; whilst near it, and equally arrayed, was the recumbent figure of Cypris, the Alexandrian name for Aphrodite, or Venus.

On these occasions the feasts—to which only the favoured were bidden—were sumptuous. Every known delicacy was placed upon

the heavily-laden tables; the choicest fruits mingled their perfume with the roses, and gave grace and refinement to the festive board; whilst wine flowed like water in rich, red, continuous streams, and was taken in costly cups of silver and gold. Music and song rose above the hum of conversation, the melody of silvery laughter; for whatever the men might be, the Alexandrian ladies of that period were celebrated for their voices.

Cleopatra herself is said to have charmed Antony as much by the ear as the eye, and one of his greatest pleasures was to recline on cushions at her side and listen to her wonderful rendering of the rhythmic measures of the poets of that day—the flowing cadences of Theocritus and Philetas, the lighter strains of Timon—given with an intonation and a sweetness of voice that have scarcely ever been surpassed; whilst with all the pride of possession, he watched the grace of her attitudes, the play of her wonderful features, and thrilled with emotion that might have done so much had it been better directed, whenever her eyes, full of fire and passion, sought his, or her beautiful hand, perfumed with costly aroma, pressed his own at passages that seemed directly to appeal to their own voluptuous lives and paraphrased all their glory and luxuriance.

These two natures, so intense, so great, so capable of the highest good, might have been worshipped by their people, might have risen to the dignity of saints, might have gone down to posterity as illustrious examples for all time, if they had only listened to the voice within them, which must have spoken in countless ways and warned them that such lives have but one ending, and that that ending is a mere matter of time and circumstance. Life's last sun must rise—and set. For the Alexandrian Queen destiny was preparing a terrible fate. The agony and remorse of her last hours must have outweighed all the pleasures of the nine years of indulgence that had gone before and so quickly flown; and a sigh like a Miserere must have echoed through the regions of space as this most beautiful woman of the ancient world fell back upon her couch and breathed away the soul that should have been as fair and spotless as the casket in which it had been enshrined for its short earthly life. For Cleopatra was still young and fair, her eye undimmed and her wonderful intellect unclouded, when "her sun set whilst yet in its meridian."

On the high festival days to which we have alluded, if certain ladies were only allowed within the vestibule of the palace, the same restriction was not placed upon the wonderful gardens. Here all might wander.

Here, also, the air was laden with the perfume of flowers, but without the faintness that grew heavy and sickly within doors. The richest blooms delighted the eye and the art of floriculture had been brought to the greatest perfection. The palm tree raised its head, and tropical fronds and the papyrus bent gracefully in

all directions; shady groves protected from the mid-day sun, and in the more retired paths might be seen the flow and flutter of

CLEOPATRA'S NEEDLE, AS IT ONCE STOOD.

graceful drapery; passionate glances gazed upon blushing faces and downcast eyes, and love vows were listened to by the sleepy and discreet birds of the air. For human nature, we have said, repeats

itself, and the golden age of youth in all time has revelled in lovelit eyes, even if followed by broken vows; the enchantment that goes before is no doubt worth the disillusion that too often comes after. It is only the pleasures of sin that are not worth the repentance which most inevitably follow them.

These festivals were not of very frequent occurrence, and well that it was so.

The Feast of Dionysus was an institution brought over from Athens, but the wealth of the Greeks was not to be compared with that of the Alexandrians, and the splendour and magnificence of the latter far outshone the ceremonies of the former.

Profusion and prodigality were the watchwords of the occasion, which appealed more to the men than to the ladies of Alexandria, who wisely withheld their countenance from these day and night orgies. For the moment the men abandoned themselves to every species of sensual enjoyment. During the processions, which were interminable, unstinted bounty was bestowed upon the people; images of all the gods and all the kings were paraded through the streets. Sham fights were held and golden crowns were bestowed upon the victors. As much as four hundred thousand pounds would be spent on a single feast day in revelry and riot.

Within the king's palace the banquets were as magnificent as they were prolonged. The guests, reclining on soft couches, abandoned themselves to the pleasures of the table, every species of voluptuousness. Again the red wine flowed in abundant streams, slaves waiting, ewer in hand, to replenish the empty chalice. Here, again, the air was sickly with the scent of roses, and in a sea of rose-leaves the guests seemed to repose. The midnight revelries were prolonged to the small hours, when many of the guests would wander in disguise through the streets: until Night seemed to retire affrighted before their unbridled licence, and the breaking of dawn and the rays of the rising sun flaming in the sky warned them that the day of the feast was past, and the day of possible repentance was at hand. But they were made of stronger stuff and more iron nerve in those days than we are in these; the world was two thousand years younger, and so was mankind, and the pains and penalties of excess were less frequent and more lingering in their visitation, if they came at all. Also, the red wine that flowed was of choicest vintage, and, taken in moderation, of rare excellence and virtue.

And, to be just, it was only on such occasions that the Alexandrians were given to excess and riot that knew no bounds.

The Ptolemies, by their lavish display of wealth at these festivals, helped to encourage lawless revelry and every species of excess and unbridled desire; yet they were wise kings, and under their reign Egypt prospered. If the Macedonian hero founded Alexandria, Ptolemy Soter and his son brought it to the height of its prosperity He—the father—built the Bruchium and most of all the greater

edifices for which it became famous. During his reign the learned men of the world, including Euclid, flocked to the famous city and held convocations; science and the arts advanced, and luxury and refinement here found their fitting home.

But Ptolemy was guilty of one error, an error not singular to great and generous minds; he did too much for the people; was too lavish in his expenditure; forgot that all had not his breadth of mind, his self-control and love of moderation. It is only when age has brought wisdom, and judgment and discretion follow on experience, that these minds learn the bitter lesson that generosity, not under the control of reason may do more harm than good, and will be returned in the form of ingratitude. Lavishness may easily become a vice.

Yet Ptolemy Soter was so wise that to his wisdom and the genius of Ptolemy Philadelphus, his son by Berenice his second wife, Alexandria owed most of her prosperity. Without them the excellent foundation laid, the seed sown by Alexander the Great, might never have borne fruit. For the first time he caused coinage to be much used, and some of his coins have been amongst the most beautiful of ancient or modern days. The Egyptians, up to that date, had clumsily settled their debts by weight, moulding their metal into the form of rings, many of which may now be seen in the Boulak, the British and other museums. Nearly all these rings were anterior to the days of Ptolemy Soter.

Commerce flourished in all its branches. Eight thousand ship-builders were summoned by him from Phœnicia; eight hundred Nile boats lay within the inner harbour of Lake Mareotis; to add strength to his navy he cut down many of the cedars of Libanus; the harbours of the city were much enlarged and teemed with life and prosperity; the ensigns of all known nations were at all times seen within the ports; the wealth of all nations flowed in upon them in one continuous stream.

Their resources seemed boundless and inexhaustible. The modern saying, "Nothing succeeds like success" might have found its origin in these days of Ptolemy Soter. The stars of his destiny must have been in fortunate conjunction when he first saw light—so astrologers would tell us—for success attended him in all his undertakings, small and great. Failure was a thing unknown to him. He was even fortunate in the great human lottery of marriage, for both his queens contributed to his success, his popularity, and his domestic happiness. The first was the Hetaira Thais, the second was Berenice, the Macedonian. Both wives were famous for their beauty, grace and wit. Both were cultivated women, whose only fault, perhaps, was an undue love of splendour, tempered, happily, by a love of refinement and the beautiful in art and nature. They influenced for good the women of their day and generation, and with all their lavish display, countenanced and strengthened chastity and dignity. Ptolemy Soter, like all great men who have wisely married before and since

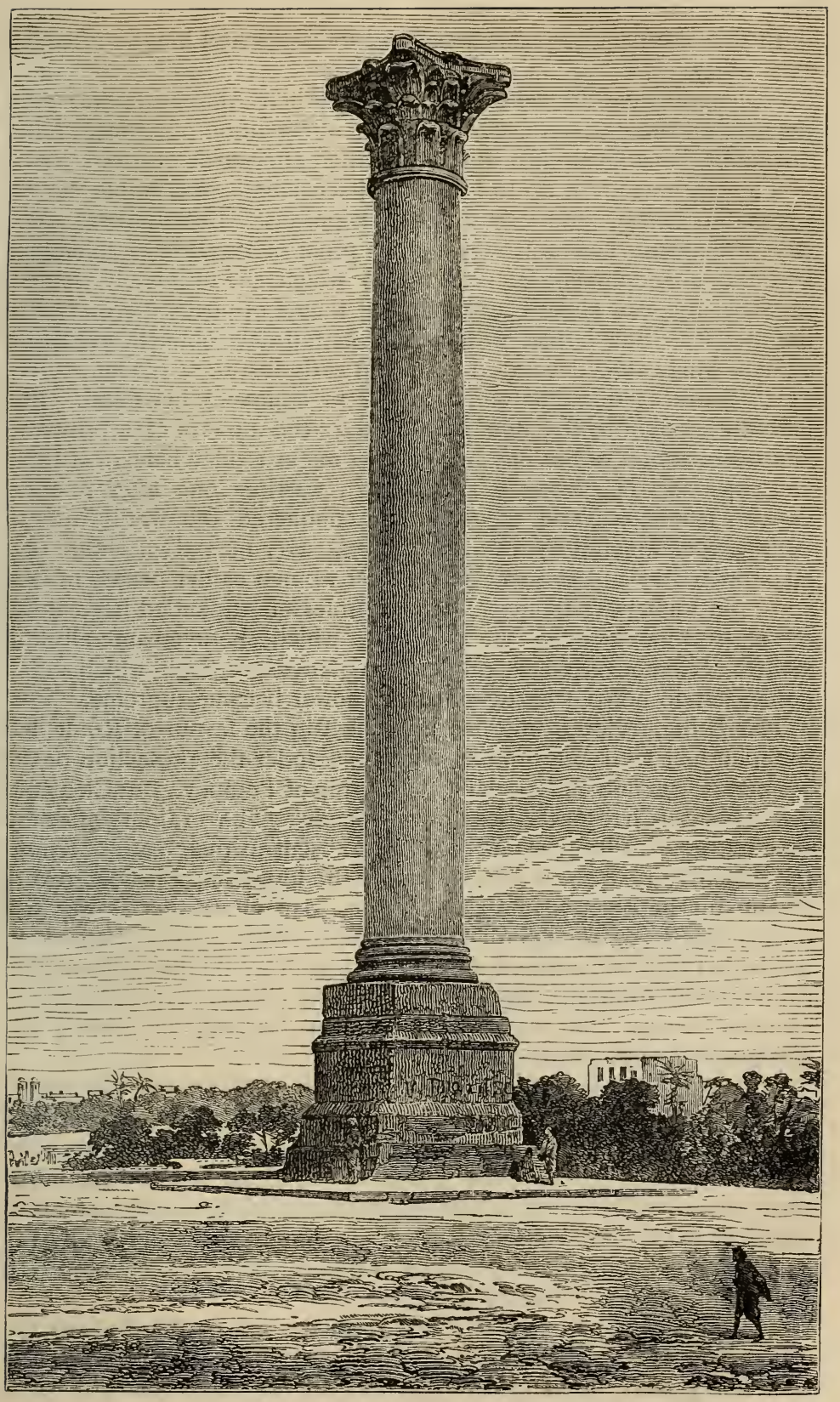
his time, owed much to the faithful and discreet counsels of his wives.

His love of science was equal to his anxiety to extend commerce. He was wise enough to see that commerce alone, or science and art alone, could not build up a lasting reputation. He gathered about him great men, and took them into his counsels. Philosophers, astronomers, physicians and poets, all were courted and welcomed. Demetrius, the orator, was amongst the most favoured, and Apelles, the painter, was raised to much honour. Euclid was his close friend and frequent companion ; so also were Erasistratus and Herophilus, his chief physicians.

A monarch who habitually cultivated the society and friendship of these great minds could not fail to reign wisely, and to leave his mark behind him for all time. And when we remember that he was not king by hereditary right, but had been one of Alexander's famous generals, we can only admit that the more credit and renown is due to him. It is easier to win a conqueror's crown than to wear it ; only the greatest minds can calmly stand the dazzling height of success. Ptolemy was himself not only a wise governor, but a man of literary attainment. He employed his leisure moments in writing the life of Alexander the Great, and it is our misfortune that it has not come down to posterity.

Towards the latter part of his reign he associated with him his son, Ptolemy Philadelphus, who thus began to rule under the happiest auspices. He had much genius of his own, which was strengthened and directed by his father's wisdom and experience. All the reforms and improvements commenced by his father he carried on and perfected.

Under his reign the famous Museum was built, and the library, begun by Aristotle, became the most celebrated in the world, reaching four hundred thousand volumes. In this he was much assisted by Demetrius. Every facility was given for study, and the Museum was presided over by a priest. The building contained a dining-room for the use of the students, a hall for walking, and another for rest and study. The dining-room was a large hall with a polished pavement and marble walls, where echoing voices and footsteps, the confusion of serving and being served, formed a strange contrast with the silence of the rest of the building ; it possessed a flat roof, and was surrounded by a balustrade of short columns : a room full of the grave dignity of Egyptian architecture influenced by the Grecian. The hall for walking was open to the sky ; it was large and beautiful ; spreading trees cast their shade and tempered the noonday glare, and fountains plashed soothingly and cooled the atmosphere. Here the students might sit and converse together ; or, taking a volume, might quietly pursue their work, braced up by the music of the falling water, the fresh air that fanned the trees, and the heavens above them, that roofed the court so wonderfully, was so suggestive of eternal repose.



POMPEY'S PILLAR.

In this manner the years passed and dynasties and kings succeeded each other.

At length came the days of Cleopatra, when Alexandria was very sensibly on the decline, and, but for the intervention of Rome, would, no doubt, have fallen into the decay which afterwards overtook her.

The city was given up to internal dissensions—an example set by Cleopatra herself and her brother, Dionysus. But in these early days Cleopatra had not as yet given proof of the love of splendour and the abandonment of pleasure to which she ultimately yielded. Her beauty was already extreme, the theme of poets, the marvel of the people; but it had not attained its full development, even in a climate where they developed early and early lost their bloom.

Cleopatra at this time was occupied in educating her mind. She had the wisdom to see that in after days the powers of a profound education added to her physical charms might render her irresistible. Nor was she far wrong. The Roman warriors one after another became her slaves, and they who had conquered the world were in their turn conquered by a woman's wiles. Her mental gifts were of a high order: as superior to that of most women as her beauty of face and form was above theirs. Learned professors expanded her natural powers and marvelled at the ease with which she overcame all difficulties. She conversed fluently in many languages, a gift which added immensely to her popularity when her power became supreme.

Her father, Auletes, who had been high in the favour of Rome, left her joint-heir with her brother Dionysus, under the protection of the Roman Senate and the special guardianship of Pompey. But Cleopatra and Dionysus had never been good friends. The ordinary affection existing between brother and sister was absent in their case. Knowing that they were to be joint rulers of the kingdom, a jealous rivalry sprang up between them, all the more dangerous that it was not openly declared, though destined to bear fruit. Each wanted an undivided throne; absolute power; and each would have been glad to be freed from the other. Of the two, Cleopatra possessed the stronger nature, the firmer will; and in the end, as always, the stronger will triumphed.

Dionysus struck the first blow for victory. He saw Cleopatra's charms, observed her powers of mind, and felt her innate superiority over himself; he realised that one day there would be a sharp, decisive conflict for supremacy, and he feared the result. He might have taken her life by stratagem or treachery, and this must be remembered in his favour. The day came when a like clemency would not have been extended to him had the waters of the Nile not closed over him and the Lotus flowers decked his bier.

Cleopatra was not put to death, but she was banished from the kingdom. Dionysus had obtained his end and reigned alone. He had not powers of mind, strength of will, or the skill of a great commander, to maintain his advantage.

Pompey had been defeated at Pharsalia and sought refuge in Egypt, thinking that his ward, Dionysus, would exercise the laws of hospitality towards him and grant him protection. But apparently they had not "eaten salt" together, and Dionysus, perhaps fearing that he might wish to reinstate his favourite ward, Cleopatra, had him treacherously murdered.

It was a fatal error. Cæsar came down upon him, and after a long and determined struggle, conquered. Dionysus was drowned in the Nile, where his vessel sank, and perhaps the Mediterranean syrens came up the tideless sea and sang his requiem whilst they twined in their hair the Lotus flowers that made beautiful his resting-place.

Cleopatra was reinstated by Cæsar, but only on condition that her second brother should reign with her. This did not please her, and she had him put to death also. Her little son, Cæsarion, of whom Cæsar was the father, was then appointed co-regent. Then, very soon, came the murder of Cæsar, the great dictator: and once more Cleopatra's liberty, if not her life, was in danger. Mark Antony had never seen her, and summoned her to Tarsus to answer for her misdeeds: a summons she had not the power to disobey.

But by this time Cleopatra was fully conscious of her charms and the fatal fascination she exercised upon men. Going to Antony as a semi-captive, she determined to turn the tables upon him, and if possible subdue him. Too well she knew how to weave her spell, and never was Mediterranean syren more successful. Good had it been for Antony had they never met: the fate of the world might have been changed. She advanced towards him, surrounded by her maidens, arrayed in all her splendour. Before the magic of her beauty, the veiled passion of her eyes, the voluptuous grace of her form, the softness of her tones and the brilliancy of her intellect, he fell a captive. Never were fetters more perfectly riveted. The chains were to fall only with death. Her power over Antony was as great in that last hour, when he expired in her arms, as it had been in the first hours of his thraldom.

One great reason for this may have been that it was reciprocal; Cleopatra loved also, and probably for the first time. She was caught in her own toils, and in her turn fell before the manly charms of Antony. But she was a willing captive; and her love for Antony removed from her the only feature that hitherto had in any way militated against her unrivalled beauty—a certain coldness of temperament, a certain hardness of heart, which melted and disappeared before the fire of Antony's passion, as snow melts before the ascending sun.

Cleopatra returned to Alexandria, and there Antony very soon followed her. She went to meet him in a vessel of unrivalled splendour; nothing that could captivate the eye and the senses was wanting. Reclining on gorgeous cushions, arrayed in magnificent apparel, the

air heavy with the perfume of roses and the spices of Arabia, the bloom of choice fruits enchanting the eye, the richest embroideries cunningly arranged, surrounded by her devoted maidens, whom she ever inspired with love rather than envy—thus she received the Roman warrior. The first glance of her eye, the first touch of her matchless hand, the first tones of her silvery voice, sealed the conquest for ever.

Lady of Ancient Alexandria.

He who had ruled men and fought battles, at whose voice the Roman Senate had listened in silence, forgot his manhood, and for the sake of a woman's love, seemed to think the world well lost. What his thoughts were, what his regret and remorse—if any—when the evil days came and the years drew nigh, can never be known; but only when despair seizes upon the mind, and Hope has fled for ever, do men resort to that fatal act from which there is no recall.

After that meeting on the shores of Alexandria, Antony and Cleopatra gave themselves up absolutely to the pursuit of pleasure. It was their one thought, their only ambition. Everything that imagination could invent or wit suggest was resorted to. Cleopatra was twenty-five, the full powers of her mind developed and her charms at their highest. They had an unlimited command of wealth and drew heavily upon its resources. Never had Alexandria seen so much splendour—never had pleasures been so uninterrupted and intoxicating. Feasting was the order of the day, revelry distinguished the night. The guests wandered through the streets in disguise. At their banquets, to which there was no end, they reclined in roses; the richest perfumes scented the air: nothing that could stimulate the appetite, or charm the senses, or rouse the passions was omitted. Their capacity for pleasure was inexhaustible. On most natures it palls after a time; on Antony and Cleopatra it never did. They were insatiable, and their attraction for each other never waned or chilled. Cleopatra dissolved pearls in wine and invented a thousand ways of wasting wealth from sheer wantonness. Antony obeyed her slightest whim, and for her would have attempted the impossible.

But to such things there comes an end : and after nine years of a luxurious dissipation never paralleled, it came for Antony and Cleopatra.

In Rome, Octavius had been rising into fame and power ; Antony

LADY OF MODERN ALEXANDRIA.

was declared a rebel and an enemy to the state ; Octavius came down upon Alexandria, and at the famous Battle of Actium Antony and Cleopatra were defeated and Alexandria was taken. Antony presently withdrew with Cleopatra to a small tower or stronghold near the great harbour, which he called his Timoneum, after Timon of Athens ; but his reign was over and his days were numbered. They both put an end to their own lives, rather than fall into the

hands of the enemy: Cleopatra by the bite of an asp, Antony by falling upon his sword, a terrible example of the evils of excess and the certainty of retribution.

Both Antony and Cleopatra had immense capacity for good, and had they been true to their nature, the power and influence of their reign might have become a proverb and an example for all time. It is singular that nearly all the Cleopatras were unhappy in their lives and unfortunate in their deaths.

Those were the golden days of Alexandria; and, as it seemed, her prosperity might last for ever. Only the very wisest, and scarcely they, can realise, in the full sunshine of happiness and success, that dark days may come: nay, that they will come. But they did not fall in the days of Ptolemy Philadelphus; did not fall until a succession of degenerate monarchs brought about the result that every nation, untrue to itself, has had to undergo.

In the days of Philadelphus Alexandria only grew in greatness, and she was never greater than in the last days of his reign. The Serapeum, the upholder alike of Egyptian religion and Greek philosophy—whose downfall under Theodosius signalized, for the time being, the triumph of Christianity—was rendered more splendid and magnificent than ever by Ptolemy Philadelphus; for with all his wisdom and enlightenment, he was a heathen. Yet it was in his day that the Old Testament was translated from Hebrew into Greek, and was called the Septuagint, because—to go back to our school days—seventy translators were supposed to have been engaged in the task.

If the Museum had been great in the days of Ptolemy Soter, it was still greater under Ptolemy Philadelphus. Never had so many great stars shone at one time in the intellectual firmament. Euclid had only recently founded geometry; and Eratosthenes of Cyrene founded the science of mathematical geography. All the exact sciences flourished, especially geography, astronomy, mathematics, mechanics, natural history, medicine and anatomy; but they were pre-eminent in philology. Strabo was at his best, Plotemæus, the astronomer, Archimedes, the mechanician, who only needed a standing point to weigh the world; and Herophilus, the anatomist.

The debt we owe to the philologists of Alexandria is incalculable. They transmitted to posterity all the literature of an earlier period in all its exactness, paying special heed to form and style. To them we owe the preservation of Greek literature, which had attained so great a height in the remote ages before the Christian Era, and has had so lasting an influence upon the Western World. The most terrible calamity of that age was the burning of the library and its nine hundred thousand volumes, in the reign of Cæsar: a calamity which reduced the scientists of Alexandria to despair, and caused many to think that the vengeance of the gods was about to fall upon them. The long catalogue of the plagues of Egypt under Pharaoh did not strike with greater consternation upon the hearts of the Egyptians

than did the burning of the library upon the learned men of Alexandria.

The misfortune was irremediable. Much that was destroyed could never be replaced; it was lost for ever, for their authors had long passed into the silent world. Cleopatra, who, in spite of her excesses and love of pleasure, was faithful to the traditions of her House, in so far as that she was profoundly accomplished herself and respected and encouraged the arts and sciences, did her best to repair the loss when she persuaded Antony to transfer the Pergamenean collection to Alexandria, with its two hundred thousand volumes: but the destruction of the previous collection dealt a blow at science, learning and research, from which it never recovered. It was not one of those calamities which stir men up to greater efforts: a fallen house may be rebuilt; a decaying power may be re-established, but the work of genius, once lost, can only be reproduced by its author. But times had also changed; the wisdom of the early Ptolomies had departed; the Roman rule was ascending, and the glory of Alexandria was beginning to decline.

As it ever has been, her decline was due to internal causes. One of the acts of Ptolemy Soter, with all his wisdom, helped to bring about the calamity he would most have averted.

He had encouraged the Jews to settle in Alexandria and had given them a magnificent quarter in the eastern part of the Bruchium, where they lived for generations, now flourishing, now bringing trouble and poverty upon themselves. As time went on, they helped the spread of sedition and revolt; discontented themselves, sowing the seeds of discontent in the minds of the never too peacefully inclined Alexandrians; ever grasping and wanting more, and encouraging the people of Alexandria to unlawful ambition.

The seed bore special fruit after the reign of Augustus, when Alexandria became the scene of civil dissensions, which almost grew into civil wars and caused much bloodshed. The Jews were the chief aggressors. Alexandria had to learn that a house divided against itself cannot stand, and as time went on, bitter and complete was the lesson.

In the reign of Tiberius they formed one third of the whole population, and their influence was widespread and unlimited. Alexandria had risen to the utmost pinnacle of success and glory under the Ptolemies and the Cæsars. Her population was over half a million. Poverty was unknown. She was rich with the "gold of Arabia," for all the trade of Arabia, of India and Ceylon, she commanded by her unrivalled position. The people were industrious, full of ability, and experts in many trades: in glass blowing, in weaving of linen, in the manufacture of papyrus, in the fineness of their embroideries, in rich silk fabrics and gold work.

The Alexandrians were a mixture of all nations; they seemed to unite the cleverness of all nations, but they united many of their

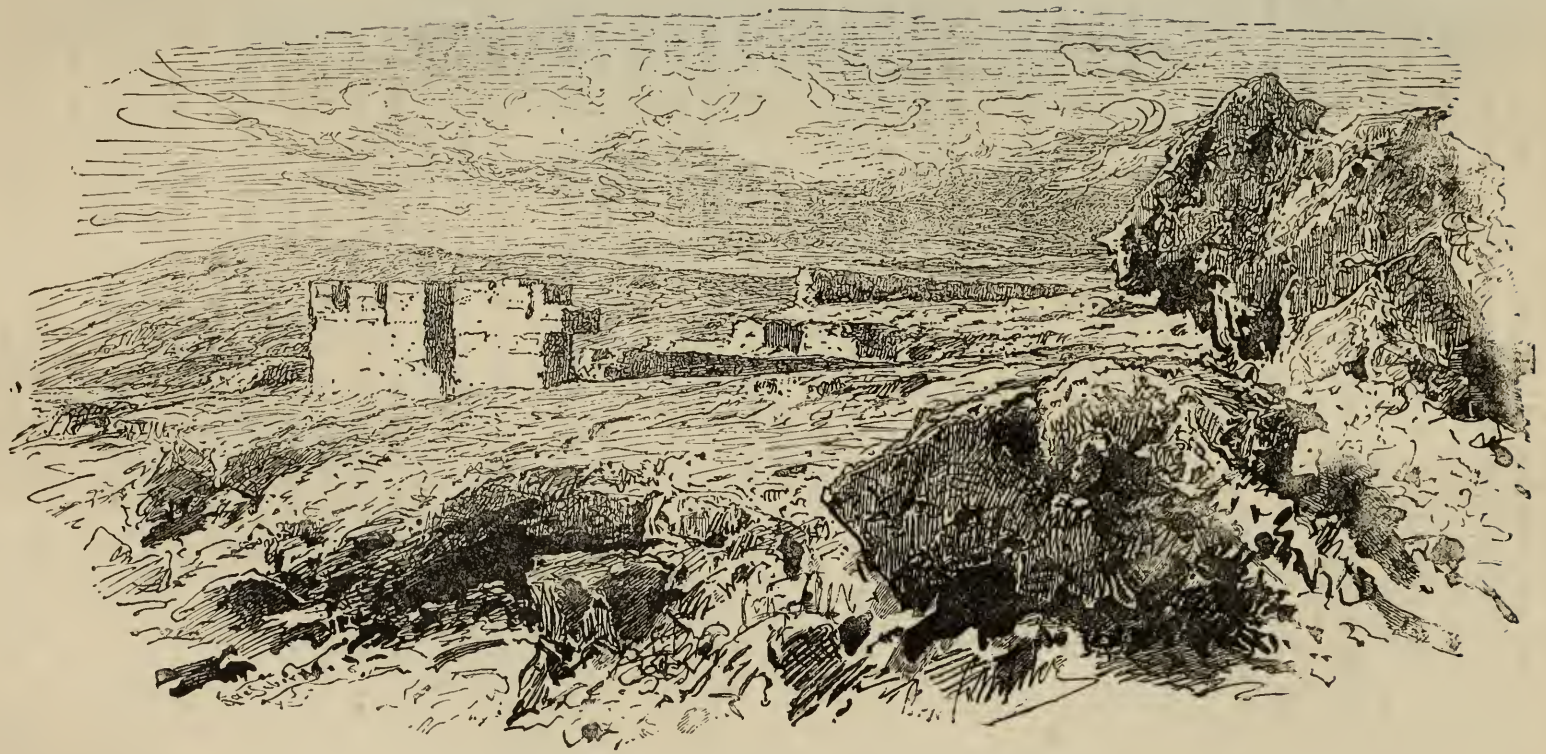
bad qualities also; they became uncertain, and upon the slightest occasion would rise up in revolt. Alexandria had become too great and flourishing, and the heads of the people were turned. Thebes and Memphis, the cities of the older world, had never approached her in lavishness and luxury; Heliopolis, Athens, had never rivalled her schools of science and literature. But internal dissentions brought about her ruin, and even the decline and fall of the Roman power was scarcely greater than the decay of this remarkable city.

Yet she died not without a struggle, and she was still great and brilliant even in her death. Religion: that most intolerant and uncompromising of all dissensions, even as it appeals to the highest and most momentous part of our nature: was a constant source of warfare, never deeper and more implacable and sanguinary than in the days of Aurelian and Theodosius the Good.

In the year 641, when Alexandria fell into the hands of Amer, after a siege of fourteen months, maintained by the Alexandrians with all the bravery and determination of a forlorn hope, he found in the city four thousand palaces, twelve thousand gardens, four hundred places of amusement and four thousand baths. One quarter, alone, was occupied by forty thousand discontented, murmuring and seditious Jews. We cannot, in these days, conceive of such magnificence. The finest thoroughfares of our finest cities are poor and humble and lifeless compared with the greatness of Alexandria. The combined riches of the capitals of Europe would appear as nothing in comparison with Alexandria's inexhaustible flow of wealth. It was so great that it took ages to bring her to poverty and ruin; and even this might possibly have been averted had not the discovery of the Cape route to India struck the final blow to her commerce; quickly followed by the unfortunate and ill-starred conquest of Egypt by the Turks, a people who never helped forward the cause of progress in any nation over which they had dominion, their own least of all.

The aspect of Alexandria at her best must have been dazzling and overpowering, both to the mental and physical vision. The sun poured down his rays upon the wide, white thoroughfares, the marble palaces, and the vision was often too brilliant to look upon. Below reposed the harbours, teeming with life and motion and enterprise, flags of all nations fluttering in the wind and adding colour and animation to a scene which found its reflection in the flashing waters. Beyond was the Island of Pharos and its lighthouse, the latter so long a wonder of the world; a building of glistening white marble, stage above stage, reaching to a height of nearly six hundred feet, which night after night threw its warning gleam over the wide waters of the Mediterranean. For then, as now, the harbour of Alexandria was one of the most dangerous in the world, and then, as now, vessels were not permitted to enter after dark.

Carrying the gaze to the right, it was arrested by the wonderful



Ruins of the City Wall of Ancient Alexandria.

temple of Cæsar, before which Cleopatra's needles were erected, brought for that purpose from Heliopolis by Augustus. There they were to remain as almost the only traces left of ancient Alexandria, until one was destined to find a last resting-place on the banks of the Thames and the other in a modern park of New York, where the passer-by may, if he so please, gaze upon them with sad reflections. They will recall to him all the grandeur and magnificence of ancient Alexandria, her wealth and power, her learning and her influence; and they will bring home to him the truth that the mightiest may fall, and that at the very best, mutability and evanescence are stamped upon every earthly condition. Of the two obelisks the English is a little the larger, being sixty-eight feet six inches high. It is of red granite of Syene, and when in front of the Cæsareum was mounted on bronze feet in the shape of crabs. The four sides are covered with hieroglyphics, and amongst them are the names of Thothmes III., Rameses II., and Sethi II. The one in Paris was in ancient days an obelisk of Luxor.

At the present moment almost the only conspicuous object of antiquity is Pompey's Pillar. The pillar is of different dates; it stands upon immense stones that once formed parts of older monuments existing in more ancient cities of Egypt. The column itself is of red granite, excellent in proportion, and is supposed to have been erected, in its present form, in honour of the Emperor Diocletian. The Greek inscription indicates this and also why it was called Pompey's Pillar; not after the Roman governor as was once thought, but after Pompeius, who was prefect at the time of its erection in 302. Diocletian was merciful to the Egyptians; he took their city and might have brought them all to an end, but restrained as far as possible the fury of his troops and made them immense grants of corn.

It has been supposed that the column was erected to commemorate the fall of Alexandria after a siege of eight months, when it surrendered to the Emperor. Achilleus the Usurper had been reigning for five years in the fated city and the people had not prospered under his rule. In spite of Diocletian's endeavours, an immense number were slaughtered at the downfall. Egypt was then overrun with disaffected people, who were doing much harm to the land, and many of them were put to death. This was the period of the decline of Alexandria—her glory had departed.

What that glory once was we have in a measure seen. She rose in a comparatively short time to the position of perhaps the greatest and most wealthy city of the world. Rome's greatness was entirely internal, of one order and colouring. Her great men went forth conquering and to conquer; but she was only necessary, only a law, unto herself. She might close her gates to the outer world, and the world would not be affected by the exclusion.

Alexandria, on the contrary, was cosmopolitan. All nations flocked

to her; her wealth was obtained by more legitimate means—commerce and industry. Of her trading there seemed to be no end. Her exports were enormous. She was the granary of the ancient world; the seven fat years of Pharaoh's dream seemed to have become her perpetual heritage. Egypt alone possessed the papyrus tree, and supplied the world with parchment and paper. The very word has come down to us. It was also called Byblos, from which is derived our word Bible.

Thus, in the present day, we have much to remind us of Egypt in our most ordinary surroundings. To her learned men we owe the collecting and compiling of the New Testament. Divine wisdom, we may be assured, would never have permitted these books to be lost; if one agency had failed, another would have been forthcoming: but, humanly speaking, it is to the Alexandrians that we owe their preservation.

All Africa brought her productions to Alexandria; the spices of Arabia scented her atmosphere, as bale after bale was deposited upon the quays of Lake Mareotis. Here India discharged her treasures, and diamonds and pearls, so esteemed by the Greeks and Romans, grew fabulous in price. Silk was sold for its weight in gold. So wealthy were the Alexandrians that they were supposed to possess the secret of making gold—a secret sought for in vain by the alchemists of all time. Gorgeous palaces upreared their proud heads in almost countless numbers. The dazzling white marble, when the sun poured down his noonday rays upon it, was more than human eye could gaze upon. Many a gilded minaret flashed and scintillated upon the heated atmosphere.

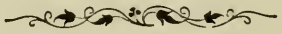
And below were the great harbours, source of so much of this inexhaustible wealth. And beyond, stretching far and wide, were the beautiful blue waters of the tideless sea, upon which the vessels of commerce and the vessels of war and the barques of pleasure sailed to and fro in one perpetual stream.

Those were halcyon days such as the world had never seen, will never see again; days of wealth and luxury and prosperity, distinguished by all the refinement of wit and intellect and culture. We may faintly imagine them, but in this prosaic age, these northern latitudes, they can never be realised. Not for us the rainbow atmosphere, the gorgeous imagery, the rich pageantry, the voluptuous ease of eastern climes. In our dreams we may wander to the Garden of Eden, to the bright, life-giving air of the beautiful Lotus-land, but the stern and cold reality attends our awakening; the fair visions of sleep have departed, the divine music we heard is silent, the blue skies are dulled.

And perhaps we ask ourselves why to man was given such infinite capacities for delight, which for ever mock him with the pain of unfulfilled desire.

What remains of the glory of ancient Alexandria? A recollection;

a sad record; a solitary broken column, typical of a life cut short, on which the one word, ICHABOD, shines for posterity with a warning as startling as the handwriting upon the wall in the days of Belshazzar King of Babylon. MENE, MENE, TEKEL UPHARSIN. Each nation in turn seems to hear the words spoken. Every country has its sun rise, attains its meridian, goes on to its decline. But to few are given the magnificence, the wealth and glory, the learning and refinement, the control of the world, as these gifts and privileges were bestowed upon the ancient city which owed its foundation to the wise energy and foresight of the Macedonian Conqueror.



TO HIS LADY.

(*Who asked a Song in Spring.*)

WHY do you bid your poet sing,
Who has no mind to song—
Who only wants to see the Spring,
Long sought and tarrying long?
The shivering, dreary winter through
I made you songs enow;
If then my song was sweet to you,
Let me be silent now!

Have I not duly sung, my dear,
Your goodness and your grace?
Now that your rival, Spring, is here,
O let me see her face!
The hedge is white with buds of May,
The fields are green with Spring,
Oh, give your bard a holiday:
He does not want to sing!

He wants to listen; all alone,
He wants to steal away:
To hear the ring-doves' tender tone,
The throstles' roundelay.
He wants to hear what can't be heard
When you and love are near—
The sweet Spring's soft and secret word;
Oh, let him go, my dear!

PAOLO SANTI.

A True Tale.

A WEEK at the hotel was quite as much as I could well manage to stand. Not that this was in any way the fault of the "Pension Suisse" itself, or of its obliging little landlord. He certainly did all he could for me, but, with the best of wills, was utterly unable to shut out the noise or moderate the confusion of hotel traffic. And the "Pension" was, in those days, much frequented, Via Carlo Alberto being a gay street, the Ministries close at hand, and Turin the Capital.

The continued roll of carriages, the inpouring and outpouring of guests and their visitors was too much for me. It reminded me of Brook Street and Claridge's in miniature.

I determined to go into private lodgings.

Signor Gargani professed himself "très-faché" at my intention of leaving, and promised to look out for something that would meet my requirements of air and quiet.

Days passed, however, and, things remaining in the state of promise only, I thought I had better set to work and look out for myself. But, at last, fate tired of making me play the "Wandering Jew," and one afternoon, led me into Via Barbaroux, one of the streets in the old, old town, tortuous, narrow, and with massive ancient palazzi on either hand, rich in wonderfully-wrought iron balconies and stately porte-cochères with battered coats of arms above them.

A bill at No. 20 caught my eye: "Two furnished rooms to let. Apply to Madame Germanetti, second floor, door to the left."

Nothing could be clearer; so I plunged into the huge entry and mounted the broad stone stairs.

They must have been magnificent in days gone by, with highborn dames in hoop, powder and patches, and with cavaliers in hose and doublet, ascending and descending with courtly grace and greeting. Perhaps, even the beautiful Princesse de Lamballe had once set her dainty feet upon the broad steps up which I was now toiling, and shaken her golden curls beneath the richly-stuccoed ceiling now arching over my close-cropped head—who could tell?

A broad landing with four doors opening upon it. To one of these was nailed a discoloured card, intimating that "Elisa Germanetti, Dressmaker," inhabited within.

With a sigh of relief—for I was very tired—I gave a tug at the frayed, green cotton cord, which, passing thro' a hole bored in the massive, sculptured panel, dangled down with its well-worn tassel for the convenience of callers.

A shrill tinkle from within. A minute's silence. The shuffle of slippered feet. Then the door opened, and Elisa Germanetti stood before me.

Of course I could only guess it was she. Yet I was sure of it. Widow and Germanetti were to be read in every feature. Her dress had but little to do with it, for she was gownless, and appeared to have nothing on but a white dimity jacket, and a petticoat of black stuff. The weather was stifling, the hour the hottest in the day, and not one in which visits, official or otherwise, are usually paid. Madame Germanetti had every right to make her toilette as airy as she pleased.

"See the rooms? oh, certainly. Will the signore step in? Will he also kindly excuse the temporary confusion?" She tripped on before, turning round to smile as she tripped. She struck me as being one of the nicest women I had ever seen.

Great brown eyes, scanty grey hair—she was capless—slight in make, and with a skin like a withered pomegranate.

She nice? I hear you exclaim. Yes, she was indeed; for the goodness of her heart could be read upon every feature, and her smile was not merely the every-day affair of the lips: it shone out clear and kind, from her friendly eyes.

She looked as if she had seen better days. And so she had, as I later learned. She was a doctor's widow, left early, and without means to provide for herself and her daughter. You would have said she was fifty, at the least; but, in truth, she was much below it. Cares and struggling had aged her. Her daughter was not quite nineteen.

As for her house—well, the portion of it that she inhabited gave you the idea that it must have been standing untouched thus for ages. The rooms she let, and which I took, were modern and luxurious in comparison. Yet there was barely more than the needful in them. They were nice and clean, however, large and lofty; and, when I had added an easy-chair or two, a writing-table and a few plants, and established therein my personal belongings, they looked almost comfortable.

It is true that they never entirely lost their ghostly aspect: but that was one of their charms, and was well in character with what I was engaged upon. Nothing worse than the writing of a novel, be it understood.

Just as I was leaving, her daughter entered. A delicate, pleasing-looking girl, the picture of what her mother must have been at the same age. The same soft brown eyes, aquiline nose, finely-cut mouth of infinite sweetness, regular oval face; but, in addition, a creamy complexion and a mass of dark hair coiled around her shapely head.

The next day I took possession of my lodgings at No. 20, Via Barbaroux. One cannot, even though living entirely apart, inhabit

under the same roof with others very long without getting initiated into something relative to their doings and belongings.

Before much more than a week had passed, I had become aware of two circumstances, viz : that my hostess had a hard time of it to make ends meet, and that her daughter had a lover. The former peeped out in a thousand ways, the latter was distinctly visible in the stalwart person of a handsome Artillery Corporal, who, at times, used to visit the house of an evening, and whom I once surprised in tender conversation with Luisa upon the stairs.

I believe the contretemps proved infinitely more embarrassing to me than it did to the young couple.

In due time I was informed that they were regularly engaged, that his name was Paolo Santi, that he was a native of Pisa, and that they were to married as soon as the term of his service was up. It had but a short time to run. With time, too, I discovered that Luisa had something preying upon her mind ; some secret uneasiness that never left her, and that rendered her absent and absorbed. She kept growing paler and thinner, till, at last, she began to look thoroughly ill and ceased to leave the house. The errands, hitherto done by her, were now executed by one of the work-girls.

Paolo, too, appeared less often, and his visits grew shorter and shorter. Something was evidently wrong.

Then another circumstance struck me.

Going out and coming in, I more than once came across a handsome Artillery Lieutenant lounging at the door : once, too, I fancied I had heard the clatter of his sabre upon the stairs.

He was handsome enough, yes ; but he was decidedly unpleasant-looking. There was cruelty in his dark eyes and in the gleam of his white teeth : something that reminded one—me, at least—of a beast of prey.

He never took the slightest notice of me as I passed ; only, once or twice, stepped politely aside with the courteous grace that distinguishes all Italian officers.

I had caught a severe cold, and instead of going out to dine at the "Caffe della Perla," as was my wont, I was obliged to have my dinner sent to the house. On such occasions Luisa used to lay my simple table, and do the trifle of waiting that I required.

One evening, therefore, at seven, she, as usual, brought in the basket with the plates, &c., and commenced laying the cloth. I happened to look up at her from my writing-table and was surprised and sorry to see her eyes red and swollen. She had evidently been crying.

"What is the matter, Luisa ? "

She did not reply, only her breath came quicker. I could see her bosom heave with painfully-suppressed emotion.

Repeating my question, I rose. She gave me a look such as I shall never forget : it was the appealing gaze of a poor, hunted animal.

For a moment she stood still, then, flinging down the spoons and forks upon the table, threw herself upon the nearest seat, hid her face in both hands and commenced rocking to and fro as those whose grief is all too heavy to bear are wont to do. I felt dreadfully ill at ease.

I had the sincerest respect for both Madame Germanetti and her daughter, for I had learned to know their excellent qualities. I would gladly have done anything in my power to help them; but at the same time, I could not help wishing myself anywhere but where I was, and inwardly cursed the cold that had confined me to the house.

I will not trouble you with details; but merely give you a summing up of what I was able to gather from the poor girl's lips.

The young officer I have already mentioned was a lieutenant in Santi's company. His name was San Martino, he was a count, member of one of the first families of Lombardy, rich and unscrupulous. He had unluckily seen Luisa in the street one day. She struck his fancy, he followed her home, and found out that she was betrothed to one of his own men; which latter circumstance at once fanned what was before, perhaps, merely a passing caprice into a furious passion.

Her refusal to listen to him was fuel to flame; he vowed vengeance; and, from that moment, commenced a systematic persecution of poor Paolo, such as to render his life a very hell upon earth.

In military life—in Italy, at least—an unscrupulous superior has a wide field for gratifying a grudge against a subordinate. Happily the cases in which it is taken advantage of are few and far between.

Guido San Martino did all he could to provoke and irritate his humble rival. Paolo could no longer do anything that was right. He was confined to barracks upon the slightest pretext—the greatest possible share of the dirty work of the company was saddled upon his shoulders.

The persecution was patent to all—but none could interfere; for, though humanity was outraged, neither rule nor regulation was broken. For an inferior to lodge a complaint against a superior, unless in very grave cases, is madness: it is out of the frying-pan into the fire. There was no "grave case" in question; it was only a systematic series of hornet stings, maddening and exasperating as a whole, trifling in detail.

Santi met with universal sympathy, it is true, and he had the satisfaction of seeing fists covertly shaken behind the Lieutenant's back whenever it could be done with safety; of hearing muttered curses poured forth ad libitum upon his tormentor's head; but, after all, it was cold comfort, and nothing compared to the moral torture he was undergoing. And to make matters worse, Santi had little of the saint about him, save his name. He was, like most Pisans, proud and passionate, and, knowing this, Luisa was living in mortal

and ever increasing dread lest, one day or another, passion should overmaster her lover and make him commit some act that would ruin him for life.

Hated and hateful as San Martino was, there was everything to fear.

Santi had but a few months longer to serve—but how much could happen within that time! And now that the regiment was on the eve of leaving Turin for Leyni, about fifteen miles distance, to take part in the autumn manœuvres held there, Luisa's anguish was redoubled. She knew that, at the Camp, both San Martino's opportunities of persecution and Santi's facilities for retaliation would be redoubled.

"Ah, signore," she wailed: "he says that, if he is not left in peace down yonder, he will kill him.

I expressed a hope of Paolo's being more sensible.

"Ma signore, my Paolo is just the very man to do it!" This with pride. "Ah," she continued, "my Santi is no sheep! If it had not been for that cursed uniform, at this hour——" She broke off, but finished her phrase with a gesture that indicated no end of horrors.

Things looked extremely black, regard them as one would; though naturally, I endeavoured to cheer up the poor girl. She would not be comforted, however.

Paolo was to leave next day but one, and was confined to barracks. A broom, for which he was held responsible, had been found out of its place. That broom was made the cause of Luisa's not being able to say a word of adieu to her lover. It *was* hard to bear!

She drew his letter from her bosom. It was not ill-written, and commenced, as do all letters written by those of Paolo's class, by the stereotyped phrase: "I write you these few lines to inform you that I am well in health, as I hope of you." Then an outbreak against "that dog of a Lieutenant," and concluded with a really eloquent declaration of love and constancy. I hardly knew which to pity most—the poor Corporal in his confinement, or the weeping girl opposite me. But as is so often the case, things appeared to turn out better than we could have dared expect. The stay at the camp passed without any particular incident, and all Paolo's letters breathed encouragement to his betrothed.

At last one came—a mere scrawl—announcing that the camp was to be broken up on the following Friday, that they would start for Turin about midnight, and arrive at the barracks, probably, a little after daylight. This was Tuesday. *Three* days more, and she would *see* her lover, to say the least; for she would get up and go and station herself in the Via dell' Arsenale, through which the troops must per force pass. I agreed to accompany her.

Luisa was radiant; and for weeks, no such gladness had been seen in the Germanetti household. But on Friday morning, towards nine

o'clock, there came a knock at my door, and Madame Germanetti entered. She looked haggard and worn, and her dress was even more eccentric than usual.

"What in the world is the matter?"

"Ah, signore, my poor Luisa—she is not herself—I can do nothing with her; she does nothing but weep. *Would* you kindly come and try to comfort her? It is a great liberty, I know, but the signore is so good—Luisa gives such heed to all he says."

Of course I went.

Luisa was crouching in a corner of the old sofa. She did not look up as we entered, only buried her face yet deeper in the cushion into which it was plunged.

"Come, Luisa, don't give way like that. Tell me what it is all about."

She muttered something from out the woolly depths in which she was apparently trying to smother herself and shook her head.

"It was a dream, signore," whispered the mother; "a dream about Santi. That much she told me, but—— Ah, God help us! all this tribulation is hard to bear!"

"A dream! Now, Luisa, how can you be so childish as to give way like that to a rubbishing dream? Come, look up."

She suddenly sat up and turned her face full towards mine. It was pale as that of a corpse, with large dark rings round her swollen eyes.

"Childish, signore! Rubbishing? Ah, if it had come to you, you would not speak like that. Merciful Mother! It was horrible—horrible, I tell you."

"Can you not tell it?"

"*Tell* it? Yes, I *can* tell it, for I seem to have it before me even now."

She shivered as she spoke. For a second she pressed both hands to her face. Then she began.

"It came towards morning. I had gone to meet my Paolo somewhere—I do not know where it was, it was no place I had ever seen—and I could not find him, though I looked and looked everywhere. Then, suddenly, I saw someone standing at my side—he was like Lieutenant San Martino, yet it was not he—that is, it was and it wasn't. He laughed and showed his white, sharp-pointed teeth, a laugh that made me shiver. He raised one hand, and, with the other showed me something lying on the ground before me. It had not been there before, it was something covered with a coarse grey cloth. It made me shudder."

"Ah, we all know what that means! My poor Luisa! my poor daughter!"

"And the person standing beside me ordered me to lift the cloth and look what was lying beneath it. I trembled, but was forced, somehow or another, to obey. I stooped, and then—oh, horror!—

it was Santi—but not in life, his breast was covered with blood and his eyes were fixed and glassy. I screamed aloud and awoke."

"Ah, signore, such a scream! It froze the very marrow in my poor bones!" whimpered Madame Germanetti.

"Ah, signore," wailed Luisa, "they have killed my Santi, down yonder—I feel it—I know it!"

The tone of the girl's voice struck a chill to my heart.

I tried to persuade her that dreams were not to be relied upon, but she was not to be convinced. Nor was I quite easy in my own secret soul, if the truth must be told.

The day wore on without bringing any evil tidings, and, towards evening, we even got the length of talking over our arrangements for the morrow's early excursion.

The next morning Luisa and I stepped from out the huge porte-cochère into the cool, silent street. The air was deliciously reviving after a restless night. The stars gleamed down upon us through the long narrow strip framed in overhead by the two lines of high, gloomy houses; and it was only upon entering Piazza Castello, that we saw the pale opal tints of dawn brightening in the east. Not a human being was visible; nothing stirred save ourselves, and we encountered no living thing but a cat, which, out in search of adventures, was now, probably, returning home. The animal stopped to gaze after us, as if speculating upon what could have brought *us* forth at that early hour.

We turned down Via Roma, and, presently entering Via dell Arsenale, took up our station under the Archbishop's garden wall. We were thus at a dozen paces from the barracks, to enter which, the regiment would have to pass us.

We were no longer alone. With the dawning day many men and women, evidently on the same errand as ourselves, began to gather in little knots, their faces all turned expectantly in the direction from which the regiment would arrive. Jokes and merry greetings broke from all around us. Luisa and I seemed to be the only sad and silent ones there. The poor girl's gloom must have infected me, for I felt terribly downhearted; and without in the least being able to say why.

Little by little the whole street was lined with two living human hedges: countless eager faces of fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, sweethearts and friends must have been there, all anxious to catch a first glimpse of their beloved ones.

It was now broad day. A few minutes more the sun would be up.

"How late they are," I heard a man say to his companion: "they ought to have been here before now. Can anything have happened? Hark!"

The faint echo of military music floated towards us.

"Here they are! here they come!" broke from a hundred mouths, accompanied by a restless shifting and straining. Every

eye was eagerly fixed upon the angle of Via Santa Teresa, round the corner of which the regiment was about to appear.

From vague, uncertain echo the music swelled into defined notes; these grew louder and louder until, with a crash of brazen harmony, the band turned the corner and file after file poured into our street. At the same instant, the sun's rays broke from over the opposite buildings; the air was suddenly alive with light and harmony.

Band, Colonel and staff swept by, the measured tramp of the men sounded like the beating of some gigantic pulse. The greetings from the bystanders fell thick around, nods of recognition from the ranks were rife. The first company had swept by, the second was passing before us; the third came up; now we should see Paolo. Luisa clutched my arm nervously and bent yet more eagerly forward. On, on they came.

"There is Carlino, Paolo's chum; Paolo must be near. What does he mean?" For Carlino had passed quite close to us and, catching sight of Luisa, had abruptly turned his head. "Paolo, my Paolo, where is he? What have they done to him?"

The excited girl's grip on my arm grew painful. Many looked round at us; some pitied, others laughed, none replied.

On swept the men. The air was filled with dust. The last company was tramping by when at the lower end of the street arose a sort of confusion, a visible and eager excitement among the crowd which, closing closely up, hindered our being able to descry the cause. There arose a babble of many voices, a swaying to and fro of the multitude like the waves of an unquiet sea. They surged on towards where we were standing, the human tide closing up behind, and now filling the entire breadth of the broad street.

Above the hum of voices rose the measured tramp of a piquet of soldiers; above the sea of faces flashed the gleam of brass and steel.

On they came, and then suddenly, through a chance opening, we caught a glimpse of Paolo Santi, in lacerated uniform, with besmirched face and fettered hands, marched through the gaping crowd under an escort of his comrades, strengthened by the addition of four gendarmes.

I tried to screen Luisa from the cruel sight; in vain.

"I knew it! I knew it!" she screamed; then fell senseless at my feet.

Three hours later I was sitting in the Adjutant Major's office listening to the sad tale he was so kindly telling me.

We had met almost daily at the café where he, too, dined, and, from time to time, had exchanged a few words, a newspaper, or one or another of those trifling courtesies that go so far towards making life pleasant; so that on my sending up my card, he at once received me in the most friendly manner.

The substance of his relation was this: San Martino's persecution

of poor Santi had been quite as bad at the camp as in town (Paolo's letters to Luisa, then, had been but a pious fraud to set her heart at rest). However, while in camp nothing particular had been the result. It was, unhappily, upon the march back that the catastrophe had come. They had left shortly after midnight, setting forth with glad hearts and willing feet, eager to find themselves once more in their old haunts and amid their former associates and friends.

All had gone on well till they arrived at the Madonna di Campagna, a long, straggling village just below the heights of Superga. Moved by a spirit of thoughtless mischief, more than one thundering knock had been given with the butt end of a musket upon the closed doors so temptingly within reach. This display of elephantine waggery was promptly reproved by the officers; but the shelter of the gloom, the ease of execution, the over-flowing spirits of the soldiers and the novelty of the whole put together proved too strong at times; and so, despite all superiors' warnings, a thump, such as would have awaked the dead, was, from time to time, still heard.

It was such fun to see an upper window suddenly flung open and a nightcapped head—usually a female one—appear: such delight to listen, with laughter, to the shrill torrent of abuse poured forth upon them.

One thump, mightier than all the foregoing, was at last heard, waking the ire of a dozen yelping dogs, and causing Lieutenant San Martino to turn sharply round and demand the name of the culprit.

No reply.

"Ah, it was that hound of a Santi, of course. Fall out," cried San Martino, "fall out at once. I don't know what we want with such—— "

Here followed a word that no really honest man can tolerate.

Santi *did* fall out as he had been ordered, but only to grasp his musket by the barrel and administer such a blow with the butt end upon the head of his superior as brought him to the earth with a crash.

There had been no time for interference—almost within the moment San Martino lay stretched upon the ground, and Santi was struggling under the grasp of his comrades.

Paolo had, of course, been arrested there and then; while San Martino was laid upon a door and borne to the nearest waggon to be conveyed to the hospital.

"And what will be the end of it all?" I asked.

"A court-martial, to begin with."

"And then?"

"The case is a terribly serious one, you see. Had the fellow done what he did at any other moment—well, it would have been bad enough, even then; but on a march! A regiment on a march is considered as if on war footing, and in time of war similar offences are punished by—death."

"By death!"

"Yes. But it's no use," continued the Adjutant kindly, "looking upon things in their worst light. Much, also, will depend upon how San Martino gets on. Should the hurt be of little consequence, and should he interest himself in the fate of his aggressor, why then, perhaps, something might be done. I am really sorry that I can give no better consolation for the moment. We shall, however, continue to meet at the Café, and I will keep you well posted in the affair. Pray excuse me a moment."

An orderly had entered with a handful of papers, and I took the occasion to rise. With cordial thanks and a hearty shake of the hand, I left the office.

Weeks of agony for poor Luisa followed.

San Martino lay fluctuating between life and death, till, at last, youth and a strong constitution triumphed.

But it was not until after the lapse of nearly five months that the court martial could be held. Public opinion was full of sympathy for Santi and utterly hostile to San Martino. Not so, however, the stern disciplinarians who had to try the cause. In spite of an eloquent defence that even brought tears to the eyes of many who had heard it, Paolo Santi was sentenced to be shot.

The only mitigation that could be wrung from the tribunal was the concession of his giving the fatal signal himself. He—Santi—refused to appeal for a second trial. It would only be protraction of agony.

No hope remained, save in the clemency of the King. Santi was imprisoned in the Citadel, there to await his doom: Luisa took to her bed: the world looked out for some new source of pleasant excitement.

But now Madame Germanetti came forward and displayed an energy of which I should scarcely have thought her capable. She actually took a journey to Milan, and I believe the good old creature had, till then, never set foot in a railway carriage.

It seems that, years ago, she had once chanced to have to make a dress for the Marchioness Pallavicini, a lady whose name is associated with so many good works as to render further explanation needless. She was the relict of the Georgio Pallavicini who had suffered with Silvio Pellico for Italy's cause, and, as such, had free and welcome access everywhere. This Madame Germanetti well knew.

The Marchioness was residing at Milan, and to Milan Madame Germanetti determined to go, and she went.

The next day both mother and Marchioness were beside poor Luisa's bed, whispering comfort and hope. All was quickly arranged. Santi's mother would make the petition—a horrid document in Italy, whose very name, "Supplica," excites aversion—the Marchioness would present it to His Majesty in person.

She had no difficulty in obtaining an audience. I had the following details of the same from a near relation of the Marchioness, who had recounted it to him word for word.

With all the eloquence she was mistress of, with all the warmth of her generous heart, she had pleaded the unhappy Santi's cause.

"I cannot—I cannot—I cannot," replied the King. "Not that, God knows, I would not do it willingly. But it is a case in which I cannot grant a pardon. It gives me the deepest pain to refuse, but I am compelled to do so. I should be unconstitutional if I did otherwise, and it would create a precedent. Who knows what trouble might arise? Ask me something that I *can* grant—you shall not have to ask twice."

"I have nothing else to ask, Sire."

Victor Emanuel fixed his eyes upon the Marchioness's face for a second, then rose abruptly and commenced pacing the apartment with his hands behind his back.

The Marchioness also rose, and stood awaiting her dismissal.

"I will tell you what I *can* do, perhaps," said he, stopping short before her. "Let Lieutenant San Martino send in a supplica in the man's favour, and then I will see what can be done. Will that satisfy you?"

"God bless your Majesty. Your heart is noble as that of all your race."

There were tears in her eyes as she spoke; nor were the King's eyes quite dry.

Lieutenant San Martino utterly refused to make the required petition. He resigned, and retired to one of his estates near Cuneo. He did wisely in this latter.

A mild morning towards the end of February. The first rays of the rising sun are darting down from over the hills of Superga, to splinter in a sheaf of golden arrows against the dark red walls of the old citadel. A silent and sorrowing crowd is assembled outside the gates; they know that a tragedy is about to be enacted within them, and they are there to catch some indication of its progress.

Strange! Not ten of a similar crowd would sign a death-warrant; but, alas, not two would hesitate to witness its execution!

The sky was blue and cloudless, there was a purple hue upon the budding trees; at times there was almost a breath of spring upon the breeze.

Overleaping the high wall of that mediæval fortress, the sun's golden rays suddenly pour through the broad, low window of a solitary cell, flooding the gloomy prison-house with light and warmth. Paolo Santi is sitting upon his bed in one corner; he gazes with mingled feelings of bitterness and pleasure at the golden shower.

It was the last sunrise he would ever see upon earth, and he knew it.

His was a cruel fate! To die so young; to die by the hands of his comrades. To leave life and love behind him when they were at

their freshest. But a few weeks more and his term of service would have been over; he would have been restored once more to his home and family. Now, an open grave and a coffin were awaiting him at but a few yards' distance.

Bitterly he cursed his want of self-control. For the sake of his dear ones at home, for the love of poor Luisa, surely he ought to have borne all with resignation and patience.

In his anguish he ground his teeth and grasped the thin edge of his mattress convulsively with his hands. Not in fear, though. There was not the shadow of that in it all; only in dire self-reproach. For in the expectancy of death's knocking at his door the next moment, perhaps, all his wrongs suddenly faded into naught, leaving but the joys that might have been his behind.

Through those golden sunbeams his soul winged its way back to the old home at Pisa; to his father and mother, his brothers, sisters and friends; to the blue olives and the wreathing vines; to the coo of the doves amid the pines and the scent of the rosemary and heath upon the hills; to the goodwill of his comrades; to the affection of Carlino, his chosen chum; to the happy hours spent with Luisa; to ——

It was a grim relief almost when all that was radiant in the Past was suddenly put to flight by the stern reality of the Present. There was the grating of locks, the thud of bolts, the door opened and a group of officers, preceded by the regimental chaplain, entered the cell.

Santi rose. His face was less pale than theirs, though he knew that his last hour had come.

The needful formalities were soon over, and then in the midst of his guards, Paolo Santi stepped over the last threshold he was ever to cross on earth.

He drew a long, deep breath as the morning radiance fell full upon and enveloped him in its glory.

All were in full uniform—he alone in fatigue dress. Slowly the cortége took its way to the Esplanade. Just before reaching it, an officer, issuing hurriedly from a side door, spoke a few words to the Adjutant Major. The latter replied by a nod. There was a momentary halt.

Then Carlino came out from the doorway. He had in his hand a tiny bunch of flowers—a pale rose, two or three violets and a couple of scented geranium leaves. The tears were coming hotly down his bronzed cheeks.

He went straight up to Paolo, and, for a moment, the two men were locked in each other's arms. But for a moment only. The signal to march was given, but in a husky tone. Many eyes were dim with tears. Carlino slipped the flowers into the prisoner's hand, and fell back.

The cortége debouches upon the Esplanade. Santi is conducted to its further end, his eyes bandaged and he put into position.

On the three sides of the square, detachments of men from all the regiments in garrison at Turin and in its environs are drawn up, there to witness the legal slaughter. Those chosen to execute it were stationed in front of the victim.

A fearful pause—an ominous silence.

Suddenly, a loud shout from the crowd without the walls rends the air, a burst of applause follows. Every hand is stayed; every heart beats to bursting. What has happened?

Count E., one of his Majesty's Aides de Camp, hurries up breathless, waving a large, square letter on high. The bright rays of the sun fall for a moment upon the huge red seal. Those near enough recognise the arms of Savoy.

"A reprieve! A pardon!" breaks from the lips of all.

Santi reeled, and would have fallen had not a sergeant caught him. He had fainted.

In a moment the truth spread: How, at the last moment, San Martino repented and wrote the petition, avowing his own heartless persecution of the man whose death he so nearly brought about.

What tears were shed, what embraces were lavished, what handgrips exchanged, all who know anything of the Italian character can readily imagine.

Paolo Santi passed his term of imprisonment in the Military Penal Establishment at Savona, and came forth again a wiser man.

He and Luisa were duly married, and taking Madame Germanetti with them, they settled upon a little farm near Pisa. Count San Martino offered to purchase the property for them, but his proposal was declined. They could accept nothing at his hands.

They did not, however, refuse the kind Marchioness's handsome wedding present: nor a less splendid one from another friend. The two together paid off a considerable part of the purchase money; the remainder was to be cleared off by instalments. The last was paid nearly four years ago.

I sometimes pay my friends a passing visit. Children are growing up around them—peace and plenty harbour beneath their roof. Luisa is growing quite stout. Paolo's hair is white as snow. That morning on the Esplanade at Turin did it.

Madame Germanetti, playing with her grandchildren among the wreathing vines is a picture of happiness and contentment.

Over Paolo's bed, framed and under glass, hangs a withered rose and two discoloured geranium leaves.

A. Beresford.

MR. STEIN'S GRANDMOTHER.

"WELL, sir," said Inspector Burleigh (of the Criminal Investigation Department) to Mr. Stein, the well-known diamond merchant, "if you are nervous about the safety of your valuables, the best thing you can do is to act upon the following advice:—As to the strong room at your office, keep on your watch chain a bunch of dummy keys for ornament (so to speak), and deposit the true keys at your banker's every afternoon; put a good safe in your study at home; but any diamonds you may take to that house may be kept in a dummy champagne bottle in your cellar there; get a secret electric alarm-push designed and fixed in your private residence, and another at your office—both of them communicating with the nearest police station; and lastly, never on any account take a revolver about with you—or you're a dead man before you get it out further than the flap of your pocket."

Mr. Stein thanked the detective, and promised to act upon his advice in every particular.

The circumstances which gave rise to this conversation were these. Mr. Stein, a diamond merchant of high standing, was expecting the arrival of a large parcel of valuable cut gems from Amsterdam. He had been warned several times by friends, and even by the authorities at Scotland Yard, that his precautions against being robbed were absurdly inadequate. No man in his senses would allow it to become notorious that he often carried parcels of valuable gems on his person, and sometimes merely locked them up in a trumpery little old-fashioned safe in the study of his villa at Norwood—a house standing alone in its own grounds, and at a considerable distance from the nearest police station—a home shared with him by no one but an old housekeeper.

Mr. Stein concluded, after a while, that these remonstrances were not altogether idle, and he therefore consulted the best authority upon the subject—namely, Inspector Burleigh, whose advice opens this story.

"If you make a sound, I'll shoot."

Such was the pleasant intimation that fell upon Mr. Stein's ears as he awoke one night from his beauty sleep.

It was a stormy winter night, and the rain beat spitefully upon the window panes. Mr. Stein might have shouted himself hoarse and no one could possibly have heard him. His housekeeper was absent, having been called to the sick-bed of a relative.

Mr. Stein tried to realise the situation, as quickly as his sleepy senses would permit. He could see very little around him, but he was soon aware that the voice was that of a masked man, leaning

over him, revolver in hand. A second man was examining the room rapidly, by the aid of a bull's-eye lantern.

"We've got you fairly at last, eh, old Stein?"

"What do you want?" inquired the diamond-merchant, nervously.

"What do we want? That's good! Now, look here, Stein: when you left your office this afternoon, you went to the Post Office in Holborn, and you ask for a registered packet and they hand you a fat parcel o' diamonds. You put 'em in your breast-pocket and come straight home. You've not been out since; so the diamonds aren't far off. So much for *your* little business."

"How on earth," gasped Mr. Stein, "do you know all this?"

"That's *our* little business! And now, if *you* please, where's the diamonds?"

"Gentlemen," replied Mr. Stein, "you have caught me very cleverly. You insist on having my diamonds or my life. I have no particular wish to die yet, and resistance on my part, I can see would be perfectly useless. I will agree to help you; that is to say, I will engage to put you in possession of the packet you are in search of, which is carefully hidden, and of anything else of value which you may require in my house—upon one condition."

"Well, what is it?"

"My condition is that you promise to give to me, and not to take away, a miniature, which is hanging in my safe. It is the portrait of my dear grandmother."

"Oh! is that all? You can keep the old lady. She'd only be in our way."

"Thank you. Then here is the key of the safe in my study; but you won't find anything there. Believe me, there is nothing in the safe, except the portrait of my grandmother."

"Now, you just come along, Stein," said the burglar-in-chief. "We'll soon see what's in the safe. And, mind—first sign of any nonsense and I'll shoot—sure as my name is ——"

Mr. Stein huddled on some clothes, and all three descended to the study. The safe was in front of them. The key was soon applied to the lock, and the safe was opened. As Mr. Stein had said, there was absolutely nothing whatever inside, except the miniature.

"I told you so!" said Mr. Stein, reproachfully.

The two robbers cursed and swore. Bill took the miniature off the peg it occupied in the safe and put it in his pocket. Stein shouldn't have the portrait, he said, till he fulfilled his promise about the diamonds.

"I am quite ready to keep my promise," said Mr. Stein. "Follow me, and I will show you where the diamonds are."

Holding a candle before him, he led the way to the cellar. The cellar door was unlocked and they all entered.

"Don't see any diamonds here," complained the chief villain. "Out with them, Stein, and look smart about it!"

The merchant reached his hand out to the back of a bin and drew forth, apparently, a magnum of Moët and Chandon's Imperial Sec.

"Here you are, gentlemen!" he said, unscrewing the neck of the false bottle, and disclosing to their astonished gaze the packet of diamonds within. "Did I not promise?"

"Good business—eh, Bill? Stein, my boy, you're a trump! Are all the other magnums here champagne, or only diamonds?"

The merchant laughed. "There are no more diamonds," he said. "You can see for yourselves. But if you will bring up a magnum of champagne with you, we'll broach it to your good health."

The men agreed, and they took glasses out of the pantry on their way up.

"Haven't you a friend in the garden outside?" inquired Mr. Stein, with a laugh. "Call him in; we may as well all drink together." And he opened the Moët and began pouring it out.

Bill went to the front door, and passed a signal to the accomplice watching without, who promptly joined the party and took his glass, as invited. All the three wore masks: they were safe from the chance of recognition. The magnum of champagne was soon disposed of, and Mr. Stein generously offered to "stand another." The offer, however, was refused.

"No, Stein, my boy! That little game won't do! We like your fizz, but we like your diamonds better!"

"Besides, we've got to tie you up," interposed Bill.

"Tie me up! What for?"

"Just a little pre-caution, Stein: only a bit o' rope round your wrists, and another bit round your ankles, and a hankercher over your mouth. We're sorry to inconvenience you, but business is business." And they proceeded accordingly.

Having tied and gagged the unfortunate diamond merchant, they bade him good-night, and wished him luck in future. They were on the point of departing when they observed that their victim was greatly distressed about something.

"Why, hang it all! if we weren't going to take off his grandmother, after all. Bill, you thief, put it back!"

Bill did so, and Mr. Stein's distress came to an end.

"Good-bye, Stein!" They waved to him and went out.

The diamond merchant lay quietly on the floor of his study and strained his ears. He heard the thieves open the hall-door gently and pass out. In another moment there was a cry and a scuffle.

Before a minute had elapsed the three thieves were led back into the room, handcuffed, and in charge of a strong body of police.

The miniature of Mr. Stein's grandmother had hung on the switch of an electric bell. When removed it released the switch, and the alarm was instantly given in the police-station, half-a-mile distant. Mr. Stein had successfully humoured the thieves till the police surrounded the house. That was all!

THE MASS FOR THE DEAD.

I WAS awake—widely, cruelly awake. I had been awake all night—what sleep could there be for me when the woman I loved was to be married next morning—married, and not to me?

I went to my room early; the family party in the drawing-room maddened me. Grouped about the round table with the stamped plush cover, each busy with work, or book, or newspaper, but not too busy to stab my heart through and through with their talk of the wedding.

Her people were near neighbours of mine, so why should her marriage not be canvassed in my home circle?

They did not mean to be cruel; they did not know that I loved her; but she knew it. I told her, but she knew it before that. She knew it from the moment when I came back from three years of musical study in Germany—came back and met her in the wood where we used to go nutting when we were children.

I looked into her eyes, and my whole soul trembled with thankfulness that I was living in a world that held her also. I turned and walked by her side, through the tangled green wood, and we talked of the long-ago days, and it was, "Have you forgotten?" and "Do you remember?" till we reached her garden gate. Then I said:

"Good-bye; no, auf wiedersehn, and in a very little time, I hope."

And she answered:

"Good-bye. By the way, you haven't congratulated me yet."

"Congratulated you?"

"Yes, did I not tell you I am to marry Mr. Benoliel next month?"

And she turned away, and went up the garden slowly.

I asked my people, and they said it was true. Kate, my dear playfellow, was to marry this Spaniard, rich, wilful, accustomed to win, polished in manners and base in life. Why was she to marry him?

"No one knows," said my father, "but her father is talked about in the city, and Benoliel, the Spaniard, is rich. Perhaps that's it."

That was it. She told me so when, after two weeks spent with her and near her, I implored her to break so vile a chain and to come to me, who loved her—whom she loved.

"You are quite right," she said calmly. We were sitting in the window-seat of the oak parlour in her father's desolate old house. "I do love you, and I shall marry Mr. Benoliel."

"Why?"

"Look around you and ask me why, if you can."

I looked around—on the shabby, bare room, with it faded hangings of sage green moreen, its threadbare carpet, its patched, washed-out chintz chair-covers. I looked out through the square, latticed window at the ragged unkempt lawn, at her own gown of poor material, though she wore it as queens might desire to wear ermine—and I understood.

Kate is obstinate; it is her one fault; I knew how vain would be my entreaties, yet I offered them; how unavailing my arguments, yet they were set forth; how useless my love and my sorrow, yet I showed them to her.

"No," she answered, but she flung her arms round my neck as she spoke, and held me as though she would never let me go. "No, no; you are poor, and he is rich. You wouldn't have me break my father's heart: he's so proud, and if he doesn't get some money next month, he will be ruined. I'm not deceiving anyone. Mr. Benoliel knows I don't care for him; and if I marry him, he is going to advance my father a large sum of money. Oh, I assure you that everything has been talked over and settled. There is no going from it."

"Child! child!" I cried, "how calmly you speak of it. Don't you see that you are selling your soul and throwing mine away?"

"Father Fabian says I am doing right," she answered, unclasping her hands, but holding mine in them, and looking at me with those clear, grey eyes of hers. "Are we to be unselfish in everything else, and in love to think only of our own happiness? I love you, and I shall marry him. Would you rather the positions were reversed?"

"Yes," I said, "for then I would make you love me."

"Perhaps *he* will," she said bitterly. Even in that moment her mouth trembled with the ghost of a smile. She always loved to tease. She goes through more moods in a day than most other women in a year. Drowning the smile came tears, but she controlled them, and she said:

"Good-bye; you see I am right, don't you? Oh, Jasper, I wish I hadn't told you I loved you. It will only make you more unhappy."

"It makes my one happiness," I answered; "nothing can take that from me. And that happiness *he* will never have. Say again that you love me!"

"I love you! I love you! I love you!"

With further folly of tears and mad loving words we parted, and I bore my heartache away, leaving her to bear hers into her new life.

And now she was to be married to-morrow, and I could not sleep.

When the darkness became unbearable I lighted a candle, and then lay staring vacantly at the roses on the wall-paper, or following with my eyes the lines and curves of the heavy mahogany furniture.

The solidity of my surroundings oppressed me. In the dull light the wardrobe loomed like a hearse, and my violin case looked like a child's coffin.

I reached a book and read till my eyes ached and the letters danced a pas fantastique up and down the page.

I got up and had ten minutes with the dumbbells. I sponged my face and hands with cold water and tried again to sleep—vainly. I lay there miserably wide awake.

I tried to say poetry, the half-forgotten tasks of my school days even, but through everything ran the refrain :

" Kate is to be married to-morrow, and not to me, not to me ! "

I tried counting up to a thousand. I tried to imagine sheep in a lane, and to count them as they jumped through a gap in an imaginary hedge—all the time-honoured spells with which sleep is wooed—vainly.

Then the waits came, and a torture to the nerves was superadded to the torture of the heart. After fifteen minutes of carols every fibre of me seemed vibrating in an agony of physical misery.

To banish the echo of " The Mistletoe Bough," I hummed softly to myself a melody of Palestrina's, and felt more awake than ever.

Then the thing happened which nothing will ever explain. As I lay there I heard, breaking through and gradually overpowering the air I was suggesting, a harmony which I had never heard before, beautiful beyond description, and as distinct and definite as any song man's ears have ever listened to.

My first half-formed thought was, " more waits," but the music was choral music, true and sweet ; with it mingled an organ's notes, and with every note the music grew in volume. It is absurd to suggest that I dreamed it, for, still hearing the music, I leaped out of bed and opened the window. The music grew fainter. There was no one to be seen in the snowy garden below. Shivering, I shut the window. The music grew more distinct, and I became aware that I was listening to a mass—a funeral mass, and one which I had never heard before. I lay in my bed and followed the whole course of the office.

The music ceased.

I was sitting up in bed, my candle alight, and myself as wide awake as ever, and more than ever possessed by the thought of *her*.

But with a difference. Before, I had only mourned the loss of her : now, my thoughts of her were mingled with an indescribable dread. The sense of death and decay that had come to me with that strange, beautiful music, coloured all my thoughts. I was filled with fancies of hushed houses, black garments, rooms where white flowers and white linen lay in a deathly stillness. I heard echoes of tears, and of dim-voiced bells tolling monotonously. I shivered as it were, on the brink of irreparable woe, and in its contemplation I watched the dull dawn slowly overcome the pale flame of my candle, now burnt down into its socket.

I felt that I must see Kate once again before she gave herself away. Before ten o'clock I was in the oak parlour. She came to

me. As she entered the room, her pallor, her swollen eyelids and the misery in her eyes wrung my heart as even that night of agony had not done. I literally could not speak. I held out my hands.

Would she reproach me for coming to her again, for forcing upon her a second time the anguish of parting?

She did not. She laid her hands in mine, and said:

"I am thankful you have come; do you know, I think I am going mad? Don't let me go mad, Jasper."

The look in her eyes underlined her words.

I stammered something and kissed her hands. I was with her again, and joy fought again with grief.

"I must tell someone. If I am mad, don't lock me up. Take care of me, won't you?"

Would I not?

"Understand," she went on, "it was not a dream. I was wide awake, thinking of you. The waits had not long gone, and I——I was looking at your likeness. I was not asleep."

I shivered as I held her fast.

"As heaven sees us, I did not dream it. I heard a mass sung, and, Jasper, it was a mass for the dead. I followed the office. You are not a Catholic, but I thought, I feared, oh, I don't know what I thought. I am thankful there is nothing wrong with you."

I felt a sudden certainty, and complete sense of power possessed me. Now, in this her moment of weakness, while she was so completely under the influence of a strong emotion, I could and would save her from Benoliel, and myself from life-long pain.

"Kate," I said, "I believe it is a warning. You shall not marry this man. You shall marry me, and none other."

She leaned her head against my shoulder; she seemed to have forgotten her father and all the reasons for her marriage with Benoliel.

"You don't think I'm mad? No? Then take care of me; take me away; I feel safe with you."

Thus all obstacles vanished in less time than the length of a lover's kiss. I dared not stop to consider the coincidence of supernatural warning—nor what it might mean. Face to face with crowned hope, I am proud to remember that common sense held her own. The room in which we were had a French window. I fetched her garden hat and a shawl from the hall, and we went on through the still, white garden. We did not meet a soul. When we reached my father's garden I took her in by the back way, to the summer-house, and left her, though I was half afraid to leave her while I went into the house. I snatched my violin and cheque book, took all my spare money, scrawled a line to my father and rejoined her.

Still no one had seen us.

We walked to a station five miles away; and by the time Benoliel would reach the church, I was leaving Doctors' Commons with a

special licence in my pocket. Two hours later Kate was my wife and we were quietly and prosaically eating our wedding breakfast in the dining-room of the Grand Hotel.

"And where shall we go?" I said.

"I don't know," she answered, smiling; "you have not much money, have you?"

"Oh dear me, yes. I'm not rich, but I'm not absolutely a church mouse."

"Could we go to Devonshire?" she asked, twisting her new ring round and round.

"Devonshire! Why that is where ——"

"Yes, I know: Benoliel arranged to go there. Jasper, I am afraid of Benoliel."

"Then why ——"

"Foolish person," she answered. "Do you think that Benoliel will be likely to go to Devonshire *now?*"

We went to Devonshire—I had had a small legacy a few months earlier, and I did not permit money cares to trouble my new and beautiful happiness. My only fear was that she would be saddened by thoughts of her father; but I am thankful to remember that in those first days she, too, was happy—so happy that there seemed to be hardly room in her mind for any thought but of me. And every hour of every day I said to my soul:

"But for that portent, whatever it boded, she might have been not my wife but his."

The first four or five days of our marriage are flowers that memory keeps always fresh. Kate's face had recovered its wild-rose bloom, and she laughed and sang and jested and enjoyed all our little daily adventures with the fullest, freest-hearted gaiety. Then I committed the supreme imbecility of my life—one of those acts of folly on which one looks back all one's life with a half stamp and the unanswerable question: "How on earth could I have been such a fool?"

We were sitting in a little sitting-room, hideous in intention, but redeemed by blazing fire and the fact that two were there, sitting hand in hand, gazing into the fire and talking of their future and of their love. There was nothing to trouble us; no one had discovered our whereabouts, and my wife's fear of Benoliel's revenge seemed to have dissolved before the flame of our happiness.

And as we sat there, peaceful and untroubled, the imp of the perverse jogged my elbow, as, alas, he does so often, and I was moved to tell my wife that I, too, had heard that unearthly midnight music. That her hearing of it was not, as she had grown to think, a mere nightmare—a strange dream—but something more strange, more significant. I told her how I had heard the mass for the dead, and all the tale of that night. She listened silently, and I thought her strangely indifferent. When I had finished, she took her hand from mine and covered her face.

"I believe it was a warning to us to flee temptation. We ought never to have married. Oh, my poor father!"

Her tone was one I had never heard before. Its hopeless misery appalled me. And justly. For no arguments, no entreaties, no caresses, could win my wife back to the mood of an hour before.

She tried to be cheerful, but her gaiety was forced, and her laughter stung my heart.

She spoke no more about the music, and when I tried to reason with her about it she smiled a weary little smile, and said:

"I cannot be happy. I will not be happy. It is wrong. I have been very selfish and wicked. You think me very idiotic, I know, but I believe there is a curse on us. We shall never be happy again."

"Don't you love me any more?" I asked like a fool.

"Love you?" She only repeated my words, but I was satisfied on that score. But those were miserable days. We loved each other passionately, yet our hours were spent like those of lovers on the eve of a parting. Long, long silences took the place of foolish little jokes and childish talk which happy lovers know. And more than once, waking in the night, I heard my wife sobbing, and feigned sleep, with the bitter knowledge that I had no power to comfort her. I knew that the thought of her father was with her always, and that her anxiety about him grew, day by day. I wore myself out in trying to think of some way to divert her thoughts from him. I could not, indeed, pay his debts, but I could have him to live with us, a much greater sacrifice; and having a good connection, both as a musician and composer, I did not doubt that I could support her and him in comfort.

But Kate had made up her mind that the disgrace of bankruptcy would break her father's heart; and my Kate is not easy to convince or persuade.

At Torquay it occurred to me that perhaps it would be well for her to see a priest. True, Father Fabian had counselled her to marry Benoliel, but I could hardly believe that another priest would advise a girl to marry a bad man, whom she did not love, for the sake of any worldly gain whatsoever.

She received the suggestion with favour, but without enthusiasm, and we sought out a Catholic church to make enquiries. As we opened the outer door of the church we heard music, and as we stood in the entrance and I laid my hand on the heavy inner door, my other hand was caught by Kate.

"Jasper," she whispered, "it is the same!"

Some person opening the door behind us compelled us to move forward. In another moment we stood in the dusky church—stood hand in hand in dim daylight, listening to the same music that each had heard in the lonely night on the eve of our wedding.

I put my arm round my wife and drew her back.

"Come away, my darling," I whispered; "it is a funeral service."

She turned her eyes on me. "I *must* understand, I must see *who* it is. I shall go mad if you take me away now. I cannot bear any more."

We walked up the aisle, and placed ourselves as near as possible to the spot where the coffin lay, covered with flowers and with tapers burning about it. And we heard that music again, every note of it the same that each had heard before. And when the service was over, I whispered to the sacristan :

"Whose music was that?"

"Our organist's," he answered, "it is the first time they've had it. Fine, wasn't it?"

"Who is the——who was——who is being buried?"

"A foreign gentleman, sir ; they do say as his lady as was to be gave him the slip on his wedding day, and he'd given her father thousands they say, if the truth was known."

"But what was he doing here?"

"Well, that's the curious part, sir. To show his independence, what does he do but go the same tour he'd planned for his wedding trip. And there was a railway accident, and him and everyone in his carriage killed in a twinkling, so to speak. Lucky for the young lady she was off with somebody else."

The sacristan laughed softly to himself, Kate's fingers gripped my arm. "What was his name?" she asked. I would not have asked : I did not wish to hear it.

"Benoliel," said the sacristan. "Curious name and curious tale. Everyone's talking of it."

Everyone had something else to talk of when it was found that Benoliel's pride, which had permitted him to buy a wife, had shrunk from reclaiming the purchase money when the purchase was lost to him. And to the man who had been willing to sell his daughter, the retention of her price seemed perfectly natural.

From the moment when she heard Benoliel's name on the sacristan's lips, all Kate's gaiety and happiness returned. She loved me, and she hated Benoliel. She was married to me, and he was dead ; and his death was far more of a shock to me than to her. Women are curiously kind and curiously cruel. And she never could see why her father should not have kept the money. It is noteworthy that women, even the cleverest and the best of them, have no perception of what men mean by honour.

How do I account for the music? My good critic, my business is to tell my story—not to account for it.

And do I not pity Benoliel? Yes. I can afford, now, to pity most men, alive or dead.

E. Nesbit.

SPRING SONG.

What are the birds so busy discussing
Whilst hopping about,
Or whilst fluttering in hedges and bushes
Just ready to sprout?

Is it all a perpetual wooing
These first days of Spring?
Are they only the love-songs of suitors
The little birds sing?

Happy creatures, to pour out your passion
Unheeding restraint!
Or unhappy—what comfort to utter
Aloud your complaint!

Yet it seems that such tender entreaty
Can scarce be in vain;
That rejection must only be asking
Sweet pleading again.

And the pleading successful, the chirping
Goes on as before;
The new bridal home must be chosen,
The wooing once o'er.

Oh, the glad time of pairing and building
No wonder the grove
Is alive with the joyous commotion
Of work and of love.

And no wonder the trees in the garden
Burst laughing to flow'r,
For all nature has caught the infection
Of Spring's magic hour.

And is planning for future completion—
For fledgling in nest;
For the full store of fruit to be gathered
To Autumn's proud breast.

Is still budding, and smiling, and singing,
In youthful delight,
While unconsciously heaping up treasure
For days out of sight.

For the love makes the work seem but pastime:
In forming a home,
Who e'er thinks of posterity's welfare
In ages to come?

So the wooing, and building, and brooding
Have no such alloy
As a definite use in the doing
To temper their joy.

And the blossoms that bask in the sunshine
So wanton and fair,
For the apples that wait on their beauty
Have never a care.

Ah, well, let the gay jubilee echo
From valley to hill;
In the Autumn, though rich the abundance,
The music is still.

Emma Rhodes.

M. L. GOW. R. TAYLOR.

"IS ONE PERMITTED TO SMOKE HERE?" HE ASKED.

THE ARGOSY.

MAY, 1892.

ASHLEY.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER V.

CHEATING DOES NOT ALWAYS PROSPER.

SURELY the house was going to rack and ruin. Old servants, who had been in the family for years and years, were turned away, and a new, ill-organised set collected in their places. Even the steward was dismissed. The sober, steady lawyer, Mr. Graystock, the confidential adviser of the Ashleys, was also discarded, and Richard Storm, the rich but upstart attorney of Stopton, taken on in his stead. The tenants received notice of the raising of their rents, the poor cottagers of dismissal, the labourers had their wages ground down, and the annuities to the old pensioners were abruptly stopped. Never, surely, had a few short months seen the like changes.

Sir Harry Ashley had died without a will. His little son, who had succeeded to the title and property, had no legally-appointed guardian, and his mother, the widow, assumed control of everything. She was of warm blood, warmer than pertains to these European climes, and some of her acts were so outrageous, so wilfully unjust, that people began to say she was either a very bad woman or an insane one. Sir Harry had died in December, and thus matters went on till May; Lady Ashley perpetrating acts of injustice daily, and the neighbourhood crying shame upon her. Perhaps none let her know the estimation in which she was held in so marked a manner as did Mr. Gay, the village surgeon and apothecary. Lady Ashley was ailing, or fancied she was, and sent for him. The little man fairly returned for answer that he would not attend her. If Master Philip—he begged pardon, *Sir* Philip—or Miss Blanche required his services he would walk his legs off to attend them, at any hour of the day or night, but neither her ladyship nor her new servants need summons him: if they wanted a doctor, they might send to Stopton.

Stopton was four miles off, and her ladyship would have been delighted to dose Surgeon Gay with an ounce or two of his own arsenic. Failing the opportunity, she sent him notice to quit his

house, but the little doctor had it on a lease, and snapped his fingers at her. Lady Ashley was very ignorant of business matters.

"How many years has the lease to run now?" demanded Mrs. Gay, in a fright.

"Four."

"Then at the end of the four she will be safe to turn us out, and there's no other house in the village to suit us! Whatever shall we do?"

"Don't look so scared, child," laughed the merry-hearted surgeon. "We'll manage to pitch our tent somewhere. Four years is four years. Somebody else may reign at Ashley by then."

Somebody else did.

On a summer day in May, when the hedges were fragrant with spring flowers, when the linden-trees were bursting out, and the oak-balls were growing large; when the cuckoo was crying its note, and the blue sky was serene and cloudless, the open barouche of Lady Ashley was seen winding from the village towards her house. She occupied one seat of it, in company with a snarling, snapping dog, "Trap." She was a handsome woman, dark as a gipsy, with an arrogant cast of countenance, and keen, flashing eyes, her widow's cap suiting well her style of beauty. Opposite to her sat her children in their deep mourning, Blanche, an elegant child of ten, with delicate features, and flaxen curls shading her rosy cheeks, a perfect little beauty; Sir Philip, a stout boy of nearly six, his face broad and coarse, his eyes, hair and complexion nearly colourless. Not one of the three bore the slightest resemblance to either of the others; but Blanche was very like her late father, Sir Harry Ashley.

The carriage was going at a slow pace up the hill, when an old woman, neatly attired, leaning on the arm of a stalwart man dressed in velveteen, approached it from the side of the road, her hands raised and her lips moving, as if she would crave speech of Lady Ashley. The latter haughtily averted her head, but a second thought seemed to strike her, and she ordered the coachman to stop.

It was Watson, the gamekeeper, and his mother. He had not been discharged with the rest of the servants: perhaps his turn had not yet come. He drew aside whilst the aged woman, very tall in her day, but stooping now, approached close, and laid her hand on the door of the carriage for support, and she addressed Lady Ashley in very respectful terms, imploring for the continuance of the pension she had so long enjoyed. Twice had she been to Ashley to endeavour to obtain speech of her ladyship, who had refused to see her.

"I will not renew your pension for a day," replied Lady Ashley. "You never ought to have had it: it has been so much money taken from my children."

"Oh, mamma," whispered Blanche, the tears rising in her blue eyes, "do give it her! Papa was so fond of old Hannah."

"My leddy, it is nae many years I can trouble the world. I am

turned fourscore. It will be a hard thing for me to go into the workhouse. Indeed, I was brought up far above what you see me now."

"Brought up to absurd Scotch superstitions," retorted Lady Ashley, "and the best thing you can do is to return and live amongst them. Do you see that child?" indicating her boy.

The old lady cast her dim eyes across the carriage, beyond Blanche. "God bless him for a bonnie boy!" she aspirated, "but he is nae an Ashley."

"Not an Ashley!" sharply spoke up her ladyship. "What do you mean, woman?"

"I mean nae harm, my leddy; ye didna think I could ever speak it of you or him. And if he has na the ken o' the Ashleys, he is but as God made him. The little lassie here has, but nae he."

"He is Sir Philip Ashley," repeated Lady Ashley, with marked emphasis, bending her head forward, till her face was almost in contact with Hannah's. "You once insulted me by saying my child must be Sir Ryle, to inherit Ashley after his father."

There was an old tradition in the Ashley family that only three names could succeed to the baronetcy, Arthur, Henry and Ryle, each in its turn. Certain it is that none others ever had succeeded.

"My leddy," cried the old woman earnestly, "when they came home and told me good Sir Harry was gone, and that it was a Sir Philip who had succeeded him, I nae believed them, I didna indeed. I knew that in the course o' nature Sir Ryle ought to ha' come next, and I canna think now that it's a' canny, a' as it ought to be. We reckoned that the heir to succeed Sir Harry would be Master Ryle, Mr. Arthur's son. We knew there was this child of Sir Harry's, as well as Mr. Arthur himself, that stood between little Ryle and the title, but we believed that it would be surely brought about, as it always had been brought about, and that Master Ryle would now be the chief o' Ashley. My leddy, are ye sure that it is all straight? There was a Sir Murdoch cam into Ashley once, but he was proved to be a usurper, and was driven out o' it. Are ye sure this child *is* the rightful heir?"

What there could have been to excite Lady Ashley in these words was best known to herself, but excited she was to unseemly fury, and she set the dog on the old woman. "Have at her, Trap! Seize her! Bite her! Hiss-s-s-s-s! Have at her, good Trap!"

The dog sprang at Hannah, fury, like that of his mistress, seated in his face. But generous little Blanche, with a cry of grief, threw herself before the helpless old woman, and the dog seized her by the chin.

Lady Ashley disengaged the dog, he was obedient to *her*, and Blanche, in the midst of her terror, thought not of her own hurt, though the dog had drawn blood. "Dear Hannah, good Hannah," she sobbed, clasping the aged hands, "I am very sorry. When I

grow up and have money of my own, I will give it to you: you may be sure I will, because my dear papa did."

"God help us!" muttered the gamekeeper, as he sprang forward to drag his mother out of the way of the moving carriage, "and God help them as come after us, if Sir Philip should resemble his mother in wickedness of temper, as that drowned young Carnagie did!"

LINDEN, the pretty house jutting on Ashley Park, was once more alive with voices, for Arthur Ashley and his family suddenly returned to it.

"What have you been doing to yourself?" demanded little Surgeon Gay, gazing in dismay at his shattered appearance.

"What have other people been doing to me?" retorted Mr. Ashley. "I have been ailing ever since the last spring I passed here, when I had inflammation of the lungs. I don't think I was thoroughly cured."

"I told you you were not. I told you you had no business to return to public life, worrying yourself over your political schemes."

"It is very easy to preach prudence, Gay, but when a man has a family to provide for, how can he sit idly down? My certain income, arising from Thorncliff, is barely four hundred a year, and, with this house, that is all I have."

"Better be idle than work yourself out of health and life, as you have been doing."

"Working for little end. I could not keep out of pecuniary embarrassment, and the annoyance that has caused me, combined with the frustration of my political hopes and the cloud which Lady Ashley managed to cast upon my name and spirit, have been too much for me. Now that I can no longer stave off my illness, I have come back to Linden and quiet. I ruptured a blood-vessel about a month ago."

"Ah, it is the way with you all—putting off, putting off! If you had lived here, you would have been well now and have saved house-rent."

"That is why I have come," said Mr. Ashley, with a laugh, which sounded more sad than merry, "to save house-rent and to economise. Will you believe it, Gay?" he added, dropping his voice; "we keep now but two servants. I cannot afford more, and Mrs. Ashley works herself to a skeleton amongst the children."

"I never could have thought to see that reverse of the natural order of things—an Ashley reduced to two handmaids," observed the surgeon, his face twisted into a look of comical concern. "Why, I and Mrs. Gay manage as much as that. Oh, well, cheer up: Arthur Ashley will never stop long at that low ebb. You know that Sir Harry left you a handsome fortune, five-and-twenty thousand pounds, and that tigress of a woman destroyed the will?"

"I know, I know. I shall demand it of her. The money is mine by every law of justice."

"You will never get it," cried Surgeon Gay. "You can form no idea of the way she goes on, the awful things she does. A pretty life you and Major Hayne would have had of it with her as guardians to the children."

"Is Major Hayne here?"

"Major Hayne! he went off the day after Sir Harry's funeral. The neighbourhood was scandalised that you were not invited to it, and her ladyship had a few hard names bestowed upon her, I can tell you. Major Hayne called on me as he went away, and sat for half an hour on my surgery-counter, talking about her. She had turned him out of Ashley, she had, indeed, Mr. Arthur, as true as that my name's Ned Gay. He said he was going, then, to see if he could make things right for you and your eldest son, and he might be back in a few weeks or a few months, as the case might be."

"Make things right for me and my son!" echoed Mr. Ashley. "Going where?"

"How should I know? To Timbuctoo, for anything I can tell. I could make neither top nor tail of what he said, and told him so, but he did not explain."

"When is the best time for seeing her ladyship?" demanded Mr. Ashley.

"She makes a point of being denied to everyone who is on her bad books, go at what time they will. Squire Prout called one day, and my lady sent word out she was not at home, and stood at the French window all the while, staring him in the face. You will never get in."

"I will," replied Mr. Ashley. "And you have heard of the Ashley *will*. Sir Harry did not possess it, but my father and Sir Arthur did. I will try mine."

"If you would take my advice, you would not go at all. Great excitement might prove fatal to you: and I'll defy anyone to stave off excitement, if they get into a contest with Lady Ashley."

"I must take care of my wife and children," was the reply. "I'll try and take care of myself."

That same evening, as Lady Ashley sat alone in her dining-room after dinner, the door opened and Mr. Ashley appeared before her. She was inexpressibly surprised, not knowing him to have returned to the neighbourhood, but soon her face lighted up into a glow of triumph, and she motioned him to a seat.

He sat down in the old seat of his boyhood, for it was the home where he had been brought up, brought up to consider himself its heir. And its heir he had been, until she, with her studied fascinations, had wiled over his uncle in his advancing years to marry her, and so had deprived him of it.

"To what circumstances am I indebted for the honour of a visit from Mr. Ashley?"

"Your question and surprise are natural, Lady Ashley; for it is

indeed a matter of astonishment that my footsteps should have brought me to this house, when it has ceased to be my uncle's."

"The house is mine," she answered, indecent satisfaction lighting her dark face. "You formerly thought that when Sir Harry was gone it would be yours."

"I did not come here to recriminate or to speak of the past, Lady Ashley," he observed, "but of the present. Sir Harry Ashley made a will before he died."

"He plotted one; he and Major Hayne. I prevented its being carried out."

"He *made* one, I believe," repeated Mr. Ashley: "made it and signed it."

"And I rendered it invalid, I tell you. I tore and burnt it before their faces. A couple of old idiots! with their annuities here, and their legacies there: the largest one was to Mr. Arthur Ashley. They bound my power down to nothing, and left him, one of the idiots, and Mr. Arthur Ashley, absolute over my children. Did you think I would submit to that, from what you knew of me as Lauretta Carnagie?"

She cast the light of her flashing eyes full upon him. He understood their strange, hidden meaning: understood it as none other could have done.

"The legacy was five-and-twenty thousand pounds, as I am given to understand," he resumed.

"I dare say it was, that or more. The amount is of no consequence."

"Of every consequence, for that legacy must be mine. Will you hear what I have to say, Lady Ashley, hear it without ridicule?"

"Say on."

"If you look at me, you will see that I must speedily follow my uncle. I am dying of the complaint which took my father, disease of the lungs. Save a very poor income, I shall leave my wife and five children unprovided for. This money, which Sir Harry left to them, will increase it to riches—if we estimate riches by my present fortune; and it is theirs by every right of justice. To you, Lady Ashley, it is a trifling sum, and your children will not miss it. Let it be theirs."

"Upon what ground do you urge your request?"

"The ground of right; of equity; and"—he sank his voice to a whisper, and drew his chair nearer to hers—"upon restitution. You know you owe me that, Lady Ashley, for to you I date the ruin of my health and prospects."

"Ah!" she said, whilst a curious smile curled her mouth.

"When you brought that foul accusation against me in the public road of this village, that I had drowned your child, an accusation which you knew to be as false as I did, depriving me of my seat in the House of Commons, turning the public mind against me, you

struck me my death blow. When I saw my friends looking coldly upon me—friends from infancy, who should have known me better—I could not bear up against it. Never strong, my energies seemed to desert me, and I have since then been a failing man, lacking the spirit to make things prosper. And now that I have confessed this, let it pass for ever. Take my forgiveness, Lady Ashley, now, as we sit here alone, for all you have dealt to me, but deal with compassion by my children. For myself I do not ask the money: let it not come to them, if you will, till after my death."

"You speak of compassion," she returned; "which of us has most need of compassion, you or I?"

"I do not understand."

"If I have blighted your prospects, who blighted my heart, my fair morning of life?"

He repeated, "I do not understand," but this time in a faltering tone, as if he did understand, at least partially.

"When I came to Ashley, a young stranger, who praised my beauty admired my waywardness, which others condemned, and strove in secret, with his honeyed words, to win the affections of my maiden heart? And when he had drawn me to love him, with a fiery, ardent passion that you cold Europeans little reck of, he told me that he had only been playing with me—that he loved another. Do you know who that man was, Arthur Ashley?"

He did not answer that it was himself, though he might have done so. But she certainly put the case strongly.

"I would have laid down my life for you," she went on, passionate tears forcing themselves to her eyes with the vivid painfulness of the retrospect. "I could have loved you for ever. You were, as I thought then, the undoubted heir to Ashley, but had you become a beggar, scorned, traduced, despised, I should have gloried in loving you all the more. I do not know—in spite of my hatred to you—that the love has quite left my heart."

"It was done in thoughtlessness," he murmured; "I never meant to make such an impression upon you. How could I, when I was engaged to marry Anna Rivers?"

"Don't mention her in my presence," she vehemently interrupted; "her name has been to my feelings, since, as a searing iron. And you come to ask aid for her and her children! You are a bold man, Arthur Ashley."

"Visit your reproaches upon me, Lady Ashley, but not upon my wife. She does not deserve them, for she was innocent and unconscious throughout the whole business. I alone was to blame, and perhaps you, also, Lady Ashley, in some measure. But let us forget these grievances; surely they took place long enough ago."

"I told you that evening—you remember it—that I would never forget. I never will."

"But you will forgive?"

"I will never forgive, you or yours. You present yourself here to demand a fortune for your wife and children: I would not give them a piece of bread if they were starving in the streets. I hope that your conduct will be visited upon her for whom you forsook me; that in her lowly widowhood she will be overwhelmed with cares and poverty; that she will stop at Linden to live—or starve—and feast her envious eyes, daily, with my prosperity and my children's position and riches: the position she expected to occupy, when they deemed you the undisputed heir to Ashley."

"Cease, cease, I pray you," he implored, lifting his thin hands; "these sentiments are not befitting a woman; they would befit——"

"A fiend, perhaps you would like to say"—for he had hesitated. "Well and good. Who made me a fiend? You did, Arthur Ashley. In that one evening you changed my heart—happy in you and your image, and which you might have moulded to your will, even to good—you changed it into a sea of hatred, revenge, jealousy, all struggling for mastery as do the flames of a living fire. The struggle is not yet over, the revenge partly is: you and she are reduced to becoming my despised supplicants, and I reign at Ashley. Fare you well, sir. Our paths lie apart, as you willed it then."

She rose and pointed imperiously to the door. He rose also, and stood looking at her; possibly debating with himself whether he should make another effort to soften her. Soften that malignant countenance! With a cold motion of the hand, by way of adieu, he passed out of the room.

The disappointment seemed to have taken from him what little energy was left, and he would sit silent for hours, brooding over the gloomy prospects of his children when he should be no more. And so, May passed into June, when a rupture of a blood-vessel again took place, but a very slight one.

One evening, towards the latter part of the month, a visitor was announced. "A gentleman," the maid said, and Arthur's tottering limbs rose to receive him. It was Major Hayne. Many years had elapsed since they met, at the christening of Carnagie.

"Is this your wife?" exclaimed the Major, taking Anna's hands, and giving her fair cheek a fatherly kiss. "She does not look very strong."

"She is over-worked and over-anxious, Major. I told Anna yesterday, if I could have foreseen how all this was to end, I would never have married her. I shall soon leave her to a life of struggle with the world. Five young children, and very little provision for them."

"Oh, Major Hayne!" exclaimed Mrs. Ashley, the tears rising to her eyes, "if you could only persuade him to think of these things in a less gloomy light! I am as rich as I care to be; we manage very well. He thinks I have so much to do; but I am glad of it, for an active life suits me. I should be quite happy, if it were not for my

anxiety about him: but I know he would get well, if he strove to rally his spirits."

"My dear, I have no doubt you are very comfortable and quite rich enough," said the Major, in a gay tone. "Your husband estimates his income by what it would have been had he succeeded to Ashley, so of course it suffers in comparison. What should you say at coming into Ashley now, Arthur? You are still the next heir. Who knows but you may?"

"Who knows but I may be king of England?" retorted Mr. Ashley. "Sir Philip is a strong, hearty lad, and I am a dying man. It is but right that the direct heirs should succeed."

The Major gave a grunt, which ended in a laugh, rose, and walked sharply across the room, smiling still. He sat down again by Mr. Ashley.

"I have an old maxim, Ryle ——"

"Arthur," interrupted Mr. Ashley.

"Never mind; you are more like your father than ever, and I forget to call you anything but Ryle. Who is that?"

A handsome boy of ten had entered the room, with the bright complexion, the fair curls, and the noble features characteristic of the Ashleys.

"That is Ryle, if you will," said Mr. Ashley. "My eldest son. Ryle, speak to Major Hayne."

The child advanced with the fearless step of a young chieftain, and held out his hand with a modest, pleasant look in his large grey eyes, as they were raised to the stranger.

"Upon my word, but you are a brave lad!" muttered Major Hayne, in a tone of gratification. "You would make a fitter baronet than the ungainly little chap who bears the title. What should you say at being called Sir Ryle?"

"I wish papa could have been Sir Arthur," answered the boy boldly, "because he would not have turned off all the poor people. But Mr. Gay says that when Philip gets old enough, perhaps he will take them on again. Blanche would: she says so."

"Do you see much of your cousins?"

"No, sir. We met in the lane one day and were gilding oakballs together, but when Lady Ashley heard of it, she flogged them both, and said she would flog them ten times worse if they ever spoke to us again. We are not so rich as they are."

"And if they grew poor and you grew rich—if you lived at Ashley, for instance, and Blanche and Philip in a small house like Linden, would you object to play with them because they were poor?"

"No, no," answered the boy; "I would ask them to come and live with us at Ashley."

"You'll do, my boy," exclaimed the Major. "Always be kind and considerate to others: remember to be so when you are Sir Ryle."

"You may go and play, Ryle," interposed Mr. Ashley, a touch of

vexation perceptible in his tone. "For goodness' sake, Major," he added, as the lad left the room, "do not put such notions in the poor children's heads; it will only be worse for them hereafter. I strive to render them humble."

"I called in on Gay as I came along," observed the Major, "and a precious account he gave me of her ladyship. Why, she has been playing up Old Nick with the estate and the people since her husband died."

"Oh, it is shameful! It excites me to think of it. A disgrace to the very name of Ashley."

"Arthur," resumed Major Hayne, waiting till Mr. Ashley's fit of coughing had subsided, "I was about to say, when interrupted by Master Ryle, that I hold to an old maxim, 'Look on the bright side of things, but prepare for the worst.' I want you to do the same. You will get well if you take care ——"

"The blood-vessel ——"

"Nonsense to the blood-vessel! You'll get over it, I tell you, if you take care; but, to carry out my maxim, I would have you prepare for the other side of the case. I once asked Sir Harry if he had made his will: permit me to ask you the same question."

"Yes: such as it is; with nothing to leave."

"Well, I would have you make another, and with the least possible delay. Send for your lawyer to-morrow morning—send to him to-night, that he may be here in the morning. Make it as if you—or Ryle, failing you—were in possession of Ashley. Leave directions for all things; the disposal of the property, the guardianship of your children; just as if you were the reigning baronet."

"But Philip is the baronet," returned Mr. Ashley, looking at Major Hayne as if he doubted his sanity.

"Never you mind about Philip. Do as I tell you."

"I cannot, Major Hayne. I cannot will away property that is not mine."

The Major rose from his seat and walked about, as before, glancing furtively at Mr. Ashley.

"Now if you could only undertake to keep yourself calm, and not excite that blood-vessel you are so fond of, I would let you into a secret. Do you think I may, Mrs. Ashley?"

"Certainly you may. Arthur's spirits and health are altogether too low, now, to be dangerously excited," she replied.

"Well, I'll try it," answered the Major. "You blamed me, Arthur, for raising notions in Master Ryle, but suppose I tell you that he is certain, if he lives, to be Sir Ryle Ashley?"

"I should say you were speaking very foolishly—with your pardon, Major."

"And if I add that he, Ryle, is the present heir apparent?"

"That he cannot be. When I die, he will be Philip's heir presumptive."

"But you are not dead: you are alive and talking. What a man this husband of yours is, Mrs. Ashley; persisting in putting himself out of the world, like this! Ryle is the present heir apparent."

"To Philip?" uttered the bewildered Mr. Ashley.

"No. To you. What shall you say, yet, if I add that you are Sir Arthur Ashley?"

"Oh!" ejaculated Mrs. Ashley, rising in concern, "Sir Philip must be dead! Poor child! What has happened, Major Hayne?"

"Not he, he is as live and fat as ever, but he is not Sir Philip Ashley. Arthur, you are the real, genuine, bonâ fide baronet, and have been since the moment of your uncle's death."

They sat in consternation. "It is not possible," whispered Mrs. Ashley.

"It is," returned the Major. "You, my dear, are the legitimate Lady Ashley, and that old harridan up at the house is only the dowager. It is true, as I am a living man. Now don't go and make your hands tremble like that, sir, or I'll unsay all I have said."

"Do explain yourself," gasped Arthur, falling back in his chair. "How can it be?"

"The boy, Philip, is a usurper, a palmed-off heir. Neither her child nor Sir Harry's."

"Not their child?"

"No more than he is yours or mine."

"But she was confined at St. Ouest of a male child, who was named Philip?"

"She was. But after I and Sir Harry departed, leaving her there, for she said, in her laziness, she was not well enough to travel, that child died. What did my lady do? Instead of writing to Sir Harry, she hushed the matter up, and took an infant in the village, who had lost its parents, as Philip's substitute, and brought him home, six months afterwards, as the heir to Ashley."

"But," debated Mr. Ashley, running over probabilities and improbabilities in his mind, as a man of judgment never fails to do, "how could she have concealed it from the attendants, those she had with her?"

"She had only Nana, the coloured woman, who would go through fire and water at her bidding, and the child's nurse, a native of St. Ouest. Nana must of course have been in the secret, and the nurse she discharged when they reached Paris. Oh, I have got all particulars, signed, sealed and sworn to, besides that very nurse, and a woman named Mary Baux, the false child's next of kin, from whom my lady got him, and a clerk from the *mairie*, as they call it, to swear to the register. He's a fellow with a beard a foot long, and frightened the barmaid at the Ashley Arms into hysterics when I took them there just now, to be lodged for the night."

"How came you with them?" inquired Arthur.

"I have been to St. Ouest, hunting them up, and a long job I have had of it, for some of them were scattered. When I came here last Christmas and saw Philip, his remarkable fairness struck upon me with wonder, and I told both Sir Harry and Lady Ashley he was not the child born at St. Ouest, for that child had been dark as night. They insisted it was; at least she did, Sir Harry only spoke from her: though he did tell me the change in the boy's skin and eyes had astonished him, when Lady Ashley first brought him home. Sir Harry's suspicions were not awakened; it was hardly likely; and it is as well they were not, with death so near. Mine, however, were more than suspicions, they were certainties, and away I went to St. Ouest. I found out my lady's trick, collected the evidence in all due form, the certificate of the real Philip's death and burial, with the registering clerk, as I tell you, to swear to it, and brought the two women to confront my lady, in case of her proving restive. She'll have a surprise she little looks for to-morrow morning."

"It is wonderful!" uttered Mr. Ashley, scarcely able to believe his own senses.

"Rather so. My stars! what a mistake Sir Harry made in marrying that woman! But, Arthur, why do you suppose she did all this?"

"With the view to reigning over Ashley, I suppose, as mother of the heir."

"Guess again, my boy. That motive may have had its weight, but her chief aim was to prevent your succeeding to Ashley. Hatred to you, from all I can hear and see, seems to have been the moving spring of her married life."

"Ah, no doubt," answered Mr. Ashley, in an evasive tone.

"And serve you right, Master Arthur, if her hatred had only extended to trifles," whispered the Major, beyond the hearing of Mrs. Ashley. "You young gallants think that to make sport of a woman's heart is fair game, but you get paid out sometimes."

"She has paid me out pretty sharply," responded Arthur, the tone of his voice betraying both consciousness and annoyance.

"She has, and be shot to her. Well, her turn will come to-morrow. Will you do what I suggested? Graystock I shall want myself, and have secured him, but you can have somebody from his office."

"You mean about my will. What hurry is there for a day or two?"

"It will be better done. I wish it."

"Then I will certainly do it. I am under unbounded obligations to you, Major Hayne."

Major Hayne did not do his work by halves. He had made his preparations before his visit to Arthur, and the following day he waited upon Lady Ashley. Not alone. He had pressed into the service the high sheriff of the county, Colonel Rusherford, an old and faithful friend of Sir Harry's. Mr. Graystock, the lawyer, and little

Mr. Gay, the surgeon, the Major also took with him. The French witnesses were close at hand.

Ferocious as Lady Ashley's fits of passion had sometimes been, they were as nothing compared with the one which overtook her when Major Hayne opened his business. She denied everything; she swore the child, Philip, was hers; she would have quitted the room and refused to listen, but they compelled her to remain. "When your ladyship shall be calm, we will discuss this matter quietly," said Colonel Rusherford, "and the steps which must be taken."

"There is nothing to discuss," she impetuously retorted. "How dare you come here with your plotting tales that Sir Philip is not the rightful heir?"

"Philip Ashley died at St. Ouest, and was buried there," said Major Hayne. "He died of convulsions, and his grave is on the outside of the Catholic cemetery: and I have taken the liberty, ma'am, of putting a gravestone over it, which you forgot to do. This child, whom you call Sir Philip, is Robert Baux, the son of the postilion who was killed, driving you and Sir Harry into St. Ouest. Do you deny having adopted that man's child?"

"It is false, it is an infamous fabrication," she reiterated, after a momentary hesitation. "I adopted no child, and my own did not die."

"Take care, Lady Ashley," interposed Major Hayne. "I have just returned from St. Ouest and have brought with me ample proofs. On the evening of the day on which your child was buried you went with Célestine, one of the maids at the inn, to Baux's house, and offered to adopt the infant orphan. Marie Baux, the aunt, to whom the charge of the postilion's children had fallen, delivered the infant to you then, and Célestine carried it to the inn. Célestine is here, Lady Ashley."

Lady Ashley was visibly startled. "*Here!*"

"Outside. Waiting to be called in."

"And you would believe the word of a miserable servant girl in preference to mine!" she uttered, recovering her equanimity. "Colonel Rusherford, I am surprised that you should have lent your countenance to so infamous a business."

"Célestine is not alone, my lady," imperturbably proceeded Major Hayne. "Marie Baux is with her. And the wet-nurse is also with her; the one who nursed your child first, and this false Philip afterwards, and whom you sent back to St. Ouest, after reaching Paris. And the official who registered the death of your child has come over with the three women to take care of them."

"Lady Ashley," interposed Colonel Rusherford, "I do not wish to hurt your feelings, but the fraud is undeniable and the proofs are at hand. Under these circumstances, it will cause you least pain to give up Ashley quietly. I do not mean this day—Sir Arthur would not wish that; but say between now and a week's time."

"*Sir Arthur?*" she ejaculated, as if paralysed.

"Sir Arthur," calmly repeated Colonel Rusherford. "Ashley is his now, and he has been wrongfully kept out of it since his uncle's death."

"And in giving you a week to get out of it, ma'am, Sir Arthur and Lady Ashley will show more consideration for you than you have shown for them," added Major Hayne.

The words seemed to stun her. "Sir Arthur and Lady Ashley!" Had it come to that at last, after all her sinful manœuvring? She fell back in her chair, and her face assumed a livid hue through its dark skin.

"Should you ever cause one infant to personate another again, my lady," proceeded Major Hayne, "take care that their eyes and skin are not so remarkably dissimilar. There's the point that did for your scheme."

She sprang from her seat, fury in her voice and gesture. "I care not what you say—you are all in a plot against me. Philip is Sir Philip Ashley, and you shall not dispossess him."

Then they called in the witnesses, and the child, Philip, was fetched from the nursery by Mr. Gay. He alone would have been sufficient evidence, for he was the very image of Marie Baux, his father's sister. The latter clasped him to her with kisses and tears: she knew the Baux face; there was no mistaking it.

There is no necessity to pursue the bringing home of the proofs to Lady Ashley. They were too powerful to be confuted, even by her, or by a gentleman from her lawyer's office, who had been galloped for in red-hot haste; and the conviction forced itself upon her, in the midst of her stormy passion, that she must indeed abandon Ashley. And now arose a secondary punishment. Sir Harry Ashley, in his will, had provided for the contingency of Philip's death, and Arthur's consequent succession, and had amply provided for his wife and Blanche. That will she had destroyed, and a large portion of the money that would have been hers, now came to Arthur Ashley.

When the sad dispute and the confusion of the day came to an end, the gentlemen quitted Lady Ashley. Mr. Graystock departed for home, but the other three turned towards Linden, to report to Sir Arthur. Who should they meet on their way but the gamekeeper, Watson, moving his goods and chattels; his old mother and youngest child seated at the top of the cart, his wife and the elder children walking behind it.

"Hallo, Watson!" cried Surgeon Gay, "where are you decamping to?"

"My lady has turned me out, gentlemen," sadly answered the man. "She gave me warning, and for fear I should not go to my time, which was to-day, sent in a man this morning to enforce it, and keep possession. I have took a cottage over the hill, and Squire

Prout has promised to find me employment. Oh, sirs! my heart's a'most broke. I never thought to see Ashley come to this."

"Just turn the horse's head round," said Major Hayne.

"Sir?"

"Turn round and go back to the lodge and put your goods in again," he added to the bewildered gamekeeper. "If the man disputes it, tell him to come down to Linden, and get his orders from Sir Arthur Ashley. Her ladyship is nothing but the dowager, without any power whatever, for the child, Philip, was no son of Sir Harry's. Sir Arthur is your master now."

"The Lord be thanked!" uttered the relieved man. "It's like awaking from a nightmare."

"Are ye sure it is Sir Arthur, sirs?" cried the old lady from her high seat, though tears of joy were falling from her eyes. "Are ye sure it is nae Sir Ryle?"

"Why Sir Ryle?" demanded Colonel Rusherford, with a smile. "Why not Sir Arthur?"

"Ye ken weel, Colonel Rusherford, that Sir Ryle must come after Sir Harry; that it always has come. I knew there was something not straight, not canny, when they said there was a Sir Philip; and I dinna think now it will be Sir Arthur."

"But it is Sir Arthur, ma'am," responded Major Hayne. "And has been ever since Sir Harry's death, if we had but known it."

"But we did nae know it, sir," persisted the old lady, "and he never reigned. No, no, it will nae be Sir Arthur, now, to come into Ashley."

They pursued their way, leaving the gamekeeper to turn round his cart. When near to Linden, little Ryle met them, running in great agitation.

"Oh, sir," he exclaimed to Surgeon Gay, "make haste to my dear father. He is a great deal worse, and his mouth is bleeding."

"The blood-vessel again!" muttered the doctor to Major Hayne; "this is what I feared when I told you yesterday to get him to a speedy settlement of his affairs. Come along, Master Ryle; let us have a run."

He was a spare, active man, and he sped along as fast as Ryle. They soon gained the house. "You stop outside, my dear," he said, "while I go in."

"There's mamma watching for you," returned Ryle.

"Where is he, Lady Ashley?" asked the surgeon. "In which room?"

In the midst of her distress she started at the title, almost as the other Lady Ashley had done. Were ease and rank indeed her husband's, now that he was dying?

In a short time the doctor came out again. The two gentlemen and the little boy were on the lawn before the house. For merry Surgeon Gay, he was looking very sad.

"The old lady was right," he whispered to the former. "Sir Arthur was not fated to reign; this child is already chief of Ashley."

Ryle, of a quick, sensitive nature, whose fears were already on the work, noted the hushed voices, the pained looks. "Papa is worse!" he quickly cried to Mr. Gay, "and they have been telling me that he is Sir Arthur Ashley. Oh, sir! he is not dead, is he?"

"My dear child," said the surgeon, taking Ryle's hand, "your father is gone to a better world. See how bright and beautiful it looks up there," he added, pointing to the calm blue summer sky. "No storms, no anger, no death; all peace and love and pleasantness. I wish the time was come for us all to be there." But Sir Ryle sank down on the grass with a wailing cry.

On as fair a day as that, they entered on their home at Ashley: Lady Ashley, in her deep sorrow and her widow's weeds, with her younger children and her eldest child, its owner. Very speedily had Lauretta, Lady Ashley, when she found it must be, evacuated Ashley. Sir Arthur had desired, in the will made the morning of his death, that the property left to her by Sir Harry in the will which she had rendered nugatory, might be given up to her *upon one condition*—that Blanche should be brought up at Ashley, under the care of his wife Anna. For the welfare of the little girl, and the honour of the name of Ashley, he would not suffer her to remain with her mother, if he could by any means prevent it. Lauretta, Lady Ashley, agreed to this, through her solicitor, Mr. Storm, and seemed rather glad than otherwise to be relieved of the trouble of Blanche. She announced her intention of departing for India, the favourite home of her earlier days. England was a villanous country to live in, she said, and Englishmen were ruffians, false and detestable—she would take herself away from them. Major Hayne, who had the management of Sir Arthur's affairs, was in glee when he heard it, and sent a polite message back, that, failing an escort, he would conduct her thither himself, sooner than India should be disappointed of her. As to Philip (so to call him), he was laden with toys and sent back to St. Ouest, with his aunt and the other two, and the man with the beard, a small annuity being settled on him for life.

So the place returned to its former peace, for recent wrongs were all righted, and old Hannah Watson said she should wait her call for departure with calmness, now that Sir Ryle reigned, in his own turn, over Ashley.

A GUILTY SILENCE.

CHAPTER XX.

MARGARET'S TRIUMPH.

MARGARET Davenant was a good physiognomist, but her skill in this respect availed her nothing in her efforts to read her sister's face, eagerly as she scanned it, when the little party met together at the ruined water-mill. Beatrice wore her mask as though such a disguise were natural to her, and Margaret was utterly at fault. She felt chilled and despondent, and sat during the journey home in a fit of silence that was almost sullen, greatly to the distress of Mr. Plock, to whom the plea of a bad headache was not so satisfactory as it ought to have been. She brightened up, however, for a little while as they neared the end of their ride, and bade the young curate a kindly farewell, knowing nothing of the mischief she had done him, nor how, for days and nights to come, she would be the chief object of his thoughts. For Mr. Plock was many weeks older before his sudden bramble-fire of love for Margaret Davenant died out utterly, expiring for lack of nourishment, and before his mind worked itself back into its old quiet groove.

"I am so tired that I think I shall go straight to bed," said Beatrice, as soon as she and Margaret had parted from the reluctant Miss Easterbrook, who would willingly have sat up half the night talking over the day's adventures. "I suppose you will not stay up long?"

"Only till I have written one or two business notes," said Margaret, "which I want to go by the early post to-morrow."

The sisters bade each other good-night. "She has nothing to tell me," sighed Margaret, as Beatrice closed the door behind her; "and all that I have done has been done to no purpose."

She bent her mind resolutely to the task before her; but long after the notes were written she sat at her desk, her face buried in her hands, thinking sadly. "The fruit of my one crime is like an apple of the Dead Sea," she murmured to herself as she rose from her seat, "turning to ashes and bitterness in my mouth."

Then she went upstairs to her bedroom, feeling chill and weary after the reaction of the day, and was just setting down her candlestick, when she heard Beatrice's familiar tap, tap, on the wall that divided the two rooms. "What can Trix want me for?" she said. "Silly child! she ought to have been in bed long ago."

The candle was out, and Trix was standing by the window, like a lovely ghost in moonshine, the folds of her white dressing-gown wrapping her from head to foot, and the long tangle of her brown hair falling in dusky coils to her waist. She neither turned nor spoke as her sister entered the room. Margaret went up to her, and encircling her waist with one arm, drew the unresisting figure closer to her own, and said, "Why did you call me, dear? Are you not well?"

Beatrice slid her arms round her sister's neck, and drawing Margaret's ear close to her mouth, shyly whispered, "Somebody that you know has asked me to be his wife."

Margaret could not resist a start of surprise. "Not Hugh Randolph?" she exclaimed eagerly, bending down to peer into the face that was hidden on her shoulder, and which would not let itself be seen.

Trix's only answer was a fervent pressure with the encircling arms.

"Oh, my darling, how happy you have made me!" exclaimed Margaret, between laughing and crying—"how very, very happy!" She was going to thank Heaven, but next moment her heart shrank within her as she remembered by what means she had assisted in bringing about this fulfilment of her dearest wishes.

The summer moonlight was streaming full into the room, filling it with fantastic lights and shadows; and in the shrubbery outside the trees were whispering their leafy secrets, and seemed to be rejoicing together over the rain. Margaret sat down in an easy chair and Trix crouched at her knees, keeping her face turned persistently from the window; for she had thrown her mask aside now and fancied, foolish child! that her blushes and changes of countenance could be seen by that dim light.

"And what answer did you make him, dear?" said Margaret at length, when the full measure of her joy had in some degree toned itself down.

"I hardly know what I said," answered Trix. "A great deal of nonsense, I dare say. But I gave him to understand that his offer had taken me quite by surprise, and that I must have time to consult you in the matter, and to think it seriously over by myself; and that I would give him a decisive answer by Saturday at the latest."

"Oh!" said Margaret, with a little severity of tone.

"You know, Madge," said Beatrice, apologetically, "I had never looked on him in that light, merely regarding him as a friend; and I couldn't accept him off-hand without being certain that I could really love him."

"To be sure not, child. Very thoughtful on your part. But what is our ultimatum likely to be?"

"Really, Margery, that is more than I can tell at present. It is only three hours since the offer was made me, and a woman's mind, you know, dear, 'takes a long time making up.'"

"Hardly, in such a case as the present, I should think."

"I'm not so certain of that. But, in any case, why should I not have the privilege of hesitation? It is one of the rights of our sex. In the very act of doubting there is something delicious to the feminine mind. You say my news has made you very happy. Why has it done so?"

"Because, dear, Dr. Hugh Randolph is a man whom everybody likes and respects, your sister included; because he is a man in whose love any reasonable woman might be proud to find her happiness, and because I would infinitely prefer that you should wed this true and honest gentleman than that you should pass your life as a teacher in this and similar establishments, and find yourself left at last, in a lonely old age, without a soul in the world to care for you."

"But you would not have me marry Dr. Randolph unless I could feel towards him as a wife ought to feel towards her husband?"

"Certainly not," said Margaret emphatically. "Marry him, and him only, be he prince or peasant, to whom with loyal heart you can give the full treasure of your love; and I have yet to learn that you cannot so endow Hugh Randolph."

"And I have yet to learn that I can," said Trix saucily.

"To become the wife of a poor country surgeon would hardly satisfy your ambition, I suppose?"

"My ambition, at present, does not lie in the way of marriage at all. I have always looked forward to living with you, Meg, and to our spending many happy years together."

Margaret stroked the brown hair fondly. "Then, I suppose we must give the good doctor his *congé?*" she said, as if coming round to her sister's views, but in reality more determined than ever to carry her own point.

"I have certainly not decided to do anything of the kind," said Trix hastily. "I have one, two, three, four days before me, in which to make up my mind whether I shall say yes or no. Sweet little words, both of them, are they not? But there is a terrible significance about one of the two that makes me shudder when I think of saying it."

For more than an hour longer the sisters sat together in the moonlight, talking over this event, so important to both of them. But Margaret wisely refrained from any further pressing of her own views, not choosing that Beatrice should think that the decision at which she would have to arrive had been influenced in the slightest degree from without; while quite aware that the opinion which she, Margaret, had already expressed in the matter would not be without its weight in the scale of her sister's judgment, although Beatrice herself might probably be ignorant of the fact. There was a certain element of wilfulness in the composition of Beatrice which Margaret was obliged to consider in her calculations: the game had reached a point at which it could be won only by finessing; downright bold play would spoil everything.

"And now to bed," said Margaret at last, "or you will be good for nothing in the morning."

"She must—she must accept him!" muttered Margaret to herself, as she drew down the blinds and shut out the shivering dawn.

"Only one day more after to-day," said Beatrice dolefully, as she dawdled next morning over her late breakfast, "and then our slavery will begin; then it will be nothing but work, work, work, from morning till night."

"Even so," said Margaret quietly. "Such is our doom. But we will see whether to-day cannot afford us a little quiet pleasure after yesterday's dissipation. Mrs. Cardale's basket-phæton will be here at twelve, and I intend driving you and myself over to White Towers, the seat of Lord Borrowash, and one of the show-places of the county. So you will, perhaps, be good enough, Miss Lazy, to finish your breakfast without further delay.'

"You dear, kind soul!" cried Trix the impulsive, starting up and hugging her sister. "I won't take more than a quarter of an hour for dressing, and you shan't have to wait for me at all to-day; and if we see old Lord Borrowash, I shall do my best to captivate him. My new brown feather will take his heart by storm, provided he still retain such a superfluity."

The basket-phæton was at the door at twelve precisely, and after a delay of ten minutes Trix declared herself ready, and took her place by her sister's side. She was more subdued than usual to-day, and talked very little all the way as they went. Leaving the pony and phæton at a little inn outside the gates, they walked through the park and by-and-bye were admitted, with a number of other visitors, into the house. Margaret had come chiefly to see the pictures, and could have lingered among them for days; but Beatrice looked on everything with an absent mind, and her sister took care not to break upon her mood. The house was chilly, and they were glad to get out into the sunny park again, where they rambled about for another hour and then went back to the little inn and had a rustic tea. After tea, they dawdled about the village, and went into the churchyard and read the quaint old epitaphs on the tombstones, several of which Margaret copied; and then back home in the dewy twilight. It was nearly dark when they reached Irongate House, and Margaret, as soon as she had taken off her things, sat down to the piano. The same subdued manner was still upon Beatrice, and, although Hugh Randolph's name had not been mentioned all day, it was not difficult to tell on what subject her thoughts were running. Trix was very fond of listening to Margaret's playing, as the latter was quite aware, and to-night she played her very best. She wanted to melt her sister's silent mood and charm it into words, for she began to fear that so much intense brooding might end disastrously for her scheme. Margaret took no note of time when she was playing; how long she had been at the piano she did not know; she knew only that for

some time the room had been quite dark, when she felt a hand laid softly on her shoulder, and heard a voice murmur in her ear—"The answer is, 'Yes.'"

Margaret turned to look, but the flutter of a white skirt in the moonlight was all that she saw, as Beatrice rushed like a startled fawn from the room. Margaret kept on playing for half an hour longer, and then went up to bed. After putting out her light, she stole into her sister's room. Trix heard her coming and feigned to be asleep. Margaret listened for a few seconds to her sister's regular breathing and then, stooping over her, imprinted a kiss on her forehead and murmured a few words whose import Beatrice could not catch. Then she went back to her own room.

"I have made Margery happy by saying yes, and that is something," said Trix to herself, opening wide her eyes as soon as Margaret had left the room. "How eager she is that I should marry Dr. Randolph!—far more eager than I am. I don't understand it at all. I suppose it would never do to recall that dreadful little word. I feel half inclined to do so; but, in that case, I suppose Margery would never forgive me. I did not want to marry anybody just yet—at least, I hardly know whether I did or not; and then, he was so earnest and tender that it was nearly impossible to resist him; and so—and so it's perhaps all for the best; and I think I'll go to sleep. I'm glad I've made Margery happy."

As soon as breakfast was over next morning, Margaret despatched a note to Dr. Randolph, just a single line, asking him to come up in the evening to Irongate House, if his engagements would allow of his doing so. The Doctor replied that he would be up by seven o'clock, should nothing unforeseen occur to prevent him. Margaret tossed the note to her sister.

"Oh, Margery! what have you done?" exclaimed Beatrice, all aflame with blushes.

"Merely asked Mr. Randolph to come up this evening, that he may hear his good fortune from your own lips."

"But I did not want him to know anything about his good fortune, as you call it, till Saturday. It was only the day before yesterday that he spoke to me; and it looks like jumping at his offer to tell him so soon afterwards that he is accepted."

"Such nonsense, child! Learn to have a better opinion of your future husband. No such vulgar thought would ever enter the head of Hugh Randolph. Besides, if you love him, why not tell him so at once, and put an end to the poor fellow's misery?"

Margaret was busy all day assisting Miss Easterbrook with her arrangements for the return of the pupils. There was about her this morning an elasticity, a brightness, a gay sunny humour, which had been foreign to her for so long a time that even Miss Easterbrook did not fail to notice it, and congratulated Miss Davenant on her good spirits and improved health.

At seven o'clock to the minute Dr. Hugh Randolph rang the gate-bell of Irongate House. Margaret met him in the shrubbery. Instead of taking him in by the front door, she led him round the side of the house to the French window of her own sitting-room, but without saying a word to him that could satisfy either his hopes or fears. "Enter," she said, pushing open the window; "and do not forget the old proverb—Faint hearts are of little use in this world; and he that woos boldly, woos best of all. I give you half-an-hour to yourselves; at the end of that time I shall expect you, sir, to join me in the garden, and to hear that you have been successful."

Hugh Randolph stepped into the room, rather timidly, it must be confessed. Margaret shut the window behind him, and then betook herself to her favourite walk at the lower end of the shrubbery—a small space of ground, bounded on one side by a high wall and a narrow border of flowers, and on the other by thick clumps of laurel, and—which constituted its special attraction in the eyes of Margaret—not overlooked by even one of the many windows of Irongate House. For a long half-hour she paced slowly from end to end of this sheltered nook, joy in her heart and brightness in her eye—for had not her scheme succeeded?

At length she saw Hugh and Beatrice coming arm-in-arm through the shrubbery to look for her, and she stopped at the end of the alley to watch them. As usual, she was dressed in black silk, and had on, this evening, a white summer shawl, one corner of which she had drawn over her head to protect her from the evening damps, holding it with thumb and forefinger under her chin. As she stood thus, with her delicate aquiline face peering, white-hooded, from among the laurels, an artist's eye would have seen something worth carrying away for embodiment in a future picture.

"A handsome pair, and as good as they are handsome," she said to herself. "They little dream of the bright future in store for them. Will it spoil them and make them worldly-wise, I wonder, and forgetful of old friends, as good fortune so often does? No; I think Hugh Randolph has a heart that neither good nor bad fortune could spoil utterly; and Trix I can answer for."

"A love affair in Irongate House, and I not know of it!" exclaimed Miss Easterbrook when, later in the evening, Margaret went into her room and told her of Trix's engagement. "Where have my eyes been all this time, that I never so much as suspected such a thing? I knew that nice sister of yours would not stay with us long. And Dr. Randolph, of all men in the world! Miss Beatrice might perhaps have found a richer man for a husband, but nowhere a worthier one; and so I shall tell her in the morning when I congratulate her. And as for him, he will have the prettiest wife in all Helsingham. How charming she would look, costumed as a shepherdess and done in Dresden or Sèvres ware!"

CHAPTER XXI.

BREAKING THE NEWS.

NEXT morning Margaret wrote a short note to her father, informing him of Trix's engagement, and in due time came his approval of the same.

On the part of Hugh Randolph, there were two people to whom he deemed it necessary to break in person the news of his engagement. The two individuals in question were Mrs. Sutton, his mother's old friend, of whom brief mention has been already made, and Charlotte Herne.

When he reached home from Irongate House on Thursday evening—the evening of his acceptance—he was not sorry to find that Charlotte had retired for the night. He was hardly prepared just yet with his confession. He wanted to be alone; he wanted to familiarize himself, in some measure, with this new happiness which had flooded his life so suddenly, and which threatened to sweep away so many of the old landmarks on which his eyes had rested for years; but at present he could not speak of it to any one. Next day he was more than usually busy; and now Saturday night had come, and no word had yet been spoken. It would be useless to delay the confession any longer; what he had got to say had better be said at once; but in spite of himself his heart shrank a little at the task before him.

Mrs. Sutton lived on the opposite side of the market-place, and about half-past nine on the Saturday evening Hugh walked over to her house. As usual, she was busy with her knitting, but none the less had she an eye for everything that was going forward in the lamp-lighted room. She watched Peggy, her old servant, lay the cloth and complete the preparations for the little bit of hot supper which would be brought up the moment her knitting was put away. Then her eyes wandered critically round the room, as they had done twenty times already, to note whether the extra scrubbing and scouring, consequent on its being Saturday and the end of the week, had been done to her mind. To see that the grate had been thoroughly polished, that the carpet had been carefully swept, and that no hole or corner had been left unvisited by the duster of the rather flighty young person who acted as Peggy's subordinate, and who was inclined to consider both Mrs. Sutton and her old servant as "mighty particular," and very difficult to please.

It was only on Saturday nights that Mrs. Sutton indulged in the luxury of a hot supper; on other evenings she never thought of such a thing, and would, indeed, have considered it a piece of reckless extravagance not to be tolerated in an economical household, to have gone to such an expense more frequently than once a week. As it was, these hot suppers never agreed with her; her sleep was never so sound and refreshing after them as on other nights; but she had

been accustomed to have them for years; her husband had always been fond of the Saturday night festivals, and they had become so associated in her memory with old times and old faces she would never see again, that to give them up would have dissevered her from much that custom had rendered dear, and the week would have seemed to lack its proper and fitting conclusion.

"Aunty, I've come to have a bit of supper with you to-night," said Hugh, as he entered the room.

"You're right welcome, lad," she answered, giving him a bony hand to shake. "But don't you know," she added, more drily, "that my medical man says hot suppers are anything but good for me? And what's bad for one must be bad for another, you know, eh?"

"I should like to argue that point with you," said Hugh. "Forget, to-night, that I am your doctor, and look on me only as your friend's son."

"There's something on his mind that he wants to confess," said the old lady to herself, rubbing her nose with the point of her needle. Just then the clock struck ten; so, with a little sigh, she put away her knitting and turned to the table.

"You have said more than once, Aunty, that you would like to see me comfortably married," said Hugh, with a headlong plunge. "Are you still of the same mind?"

"I am, Hugh. I've said it; and what I've said, I'll stick to. I should like to see you comfortably married to a nice, sensible girl, with a bit of money of her own."

"That's all right, then—except, perhaps, as regards the money; and I may as well tell you everything without further preface. Aunty, I *am* going to be married."

Mrs. Sutton's knife and fork dropped from her paralysed fingers; her spectacles slid slowly down her nose and fell into the gravy in her plate. For a moment she stared blankly across the table at Hugh, and then she said, in a weak, quavering voice, very different from her usual sharp, clear way of speaking—

"Eh, lad, but I don't think I rightly understood what you said!"

"I said that I was going to get married, Aunty," said Hugh, very gently.

"Oh!"

"You are not angry with me, are you?"

"Angry with you, Hugh Randolph! No—why should I be angry?" said the old lady, trying in vain to conceal her discomposure. "You are your own master; free to come and go; free to get married if you think well to do so; why should I be angry?"

"If you are not angry, Aunty, you are not glad, as I thought you would be."

"And why ought I to be glad, I should like to know? Glad to find there are two more fools in the world—is that what you mean?"

"Oh, well, Aunty, if you choose to look at the matter in that light,

I have nothing further to say," replied Hugh, with a smile; "except this, that when you come to know the young lady, I am sure that you will like her and approve my choice."

"Every young fellow that's going to get wedded thinks the same; but we old folk don't see things through rose-coloured spectacles."

"Have you no curiosity to hear her name?"

"Not much, Hugh. Young women, nowadays, are all pretty much of a muchness; I'd not give twopence extra to have the pick of 'em."

"It would not do for everybody to see with your eyes, or we should have very few marriages, I'm afraid."

"If it's Miss Parkinson that you have been making up to, I sha'n't so much care. There's not a nicer girl going, to my thinking, than Maria Parkinson."

"Tastes differ in these matters, as in everything else," said Hugh. "The lady who has honoured me by promising to become my wife is Miss Beatrice Davenant, a younger sister of Miss Davenant, of Irongate House."

"No, Hugh, don't say that!" cried the old lady pitifully; "don't tell me that you have asked that fizmygig, fly-away hussy, who has lived in France half her life, and has no fortune but the red and white in her cheeks, to be your wife! Don't tell me that!"

"What I have told you is quite true, Aunty. Miss Beatrice Davenant, and no one but her, will become my wife; and you will therefore understand that it cannot be pleasant to me to hear her spoken of by anyone except with proper respect."

"Nay lad, nobody's fine feelings shall stop Mary Sutton's tongue! I'll speak my mind, let what will come of it. And I must say, that I gave my old friend's son credit for more sense in choosing a wife, than to think he would go and pick up with that namby-pamby wax doll at Irongate House, who hasn't a shilling in the world to call her own—(Mrs. Sloane told me all about her, and her carryings on at the picnic, and how she made eyes at every young man that took the least notice of her)—when there's so many bonny Helsingham lasses, sensible and well-to-do, who wouldn't have said 'No,' if you had asked them. Eh, dear, dear, what would poor Betsy Randolph say if she were alive now and knew of her son's folly!"

Here the old lady's voice quavered and broke down. She rose from her chair, and then paused for a moment to fumble for her handkerchief and wipe her eyes.

"And now I think I'll go to bed," she said. "Will you ring the bell, please, for Peggy? Thank you. No, don't come any nearer me, Hugh Randolph, for I have no patience with you—none at all. No, I don't want any more supper, thank you. I've no appetite for suppers, after what you have told me. Good night—good night! Eh, but your poor mother would have almost broken her heart over such a misfortune! But some men are born fools, and can't help themselves."

She was moving slowly and laboriously across the floor towards her own room as she launched these parting shafts at Hugh. He sank back despondently in his chair when she repulsed his proferred assistance so curtly, and he continued to sit there after she had left the room. He heard Peggy come upstairs, he heard the muffled voices of the two as they talked together; the faint sound of Mrs. Sutton's dry, crackling cough came to him through the closed door, and then the door was opened and Peggy called him softly, "Mr. Hugh, Mr. Hugh," and he hastened to obey the summons.

He found Mrs. Sutton seated in an easy-chair—a grim, gaunt figure, attired in a white dressing-robe and a voluminous black shawl, with a night-cap on her head that was worthy of the name. "Shake hands, boy," she said, "and let us part in peace, for at my age one never knows what a night may bring forth. I was, maybe, too hasty in what I said just now," she went on when Hugh had complied with her request. "I had no call, perhaps, to say such harsh things about this young lady, for I know nothing concerning her beyond what Mrs. Sloane told me, and I never set much value by *her* opinions. But the news came on me so sudden, like; and then I had so set my mind on your some day wedding Maria Parkinson, that when you told me it was somebody else I quite lost my head for a minute or two and hardly knew what I said. But if your heart is so strongly drawn towards this Miss Davenant, marry her, Hugh, my boy, by all means; and if you prove as good a husband to her as you were a son to my dear dead friend, she won't have much to complain of."

"You must try to love Beatrice a little bit for my sake; by-and-by you will learn to love her a great deal for her own."

"It may be so, Hugh, and I hope it will be, but we old folk don't learn to love very easily. Anyhow, let this young lady come and spend a day with me some time before long, and I'll do my best to like her—yes, my very best. I dare say, now, she'll think me an old-fashioned fright, even if she doesn't call me one."

"I am positive that no such thought would ever enter her head."

"Simpleton! A deal you know about it. Girls don't tell their sweethearts half they think, knowing very well they would never turn them into husbands if they did."

There still remained Charlotte to be told.

CHAPTER XXII.

TELLING CHARLOTTE.

THE town clock was striking eleven as Hugh crossed the market-place on his way home. He found Charlotte in the unlighted drawing-room, coiled up on a large cushion before the fire in a cat-like attitude, to which she was much addicted; for even in the height of

summer, whenever the weather was at all cold and rainy, as it had been for the last day or two, Charlotte had fires lighted in such of the rooms as were frequented by her. She started up as Hugh stooped and pinched one of her ears, while over her face there crept one of those soft, winning, child-like smiles, which seemed to offer such a flat contradiction to some of the darker traits of her character. "He has come at last," she murmured to herself, as Hugh stepped into the next room to wash his hands, "and my heart beats as though I had not heard his footfall for a year. By the same token I know that I love him. Oh, my darling! my darling! if I could but clasp you to this heart, and keep you there as my own for ever!"

A month had passed since Charlotte's double discovery—that her sight was coming back to her, and that her hair had turned grey without her knowledge; and her mind had, by this time, become sufficiently familiarised with both these facts for her to go about her ordinary avocations in her ordinary way, and without giving rise to the least suspicion, even on the part of those who knew her best, that she differed in any way from the Charlotte of six months ago. Her eyes were strengthening slowly but surely, although as yet she could see nothing clearly, a person standing between her and the light seeming nothing more than a dull, black blotch, featureless and vague of outline: but even this to her was a great gain, and the improvement was still going on. But, as before stated, she guarded her precious secret jealously, and from no one more so than from her cousin Hugh. The agony of grief and shame into which she had fallen on discovering the changed colour of her hair, had, from its very intensity, worn itself away, leaving only a dull, numb sense as of some great misfortune, that seldom left her either by night or day. Latterly, however, she had taken some small comfort to herself, from the fact that upstairs, carefully put away in her own private cupboard, was a bottle of *The Magical Oil of the Sahara*, of which precious compound (so said the label) a few applications were warranted to restore to the greyest hair the natural gloss and colour of youth, as was proved by "thousands of testimonials from all parts of the world." For this stuff Charlotte had paid an old hag, with whom she now and then had secret dealings, the sum of two sovereigns; and on its efficacy and ability to do that which it promised all Charlotte's hopes were now built. She was waiting to try it till her sight should be sufficiently restored to enable her to do so without the assistance of anyone. Poor child! when the proper moment for her experiment should have happily arrived, she wanted the world to believe that to the beneficence of Nature alone was due the restoration of sight to her eyes and colour to her hair.

"Basking before the fire as usual," said Hugh cheerily as he came into the room. "What a starved creature it is!"

"Even kittens can scratch, sir; and I advise you to be more careful what you say. Shall I order your Highness a *fricassee* of

young mice for supper? You have no idea how tender they are!"

"Wretch! do you take me for the Marquis of Carrabas? Not another morsel shall pass these abstemious lips till to-morrow morning."

"What, more letters!" he added, tossing over two or three epistles that lay on the table as the servant brought in a lighted lamp. "'The cry is, still they come.' At this rate I shall want a private secretary before long. How would the post suit you, Charley?"

"Oh, admirably! Only wait till I shall have my new spectacles for making the blind see, the invention of the celebrated Dr. Phosco-boscophornio. You haven't heard of them? That's just like your ignorance."

She had been hunting about in one of the cabinet drawers, and she now came up to Hugh with a cigar and a match. "Is one permitted to smoke here?" he asked, pausing in the act of opening one of his letters.

"*Oui, monsieur*," answered Charlotte; "provided you do it only now and then."

Hugh lighted his cigar, and then skimmed through his letters in an indifferent, absent-minded way. Charlotte went and ensconced herself in one of the old-fashioned window-seats behind the half-drawn curtains, a position where the semi-obscurity was grateful to her eyes.

"You have not heard from your London correspondent, have you, Hugh," she asked, "since you had that letter on my birthday?"

"If you mean Cornthwaite, I have not heard from him."

"I don't think you ever will hear from him again, Hugh."

"You don't know Cornthwaite, or you would not make such a remark. He is one of the sleuth hounds of policedom, slow and sure, and rarely at fault. Let him but once strike the trail of his quarry, and he will follow it up with a sagacity that to the uninitiated seems little less than marvellous."

"For all that," said Charlotte, "it's my belief that you will never hear anything more of *her*. I question greatly whether she is in London at all. Were you not merely led away by your own fancy, when you thought you saw her face in the crowd, now more than a year ago?"

Hugh shook his head dissentingly. "No," he said, "I saw her as plainly as ever I saw anyone in my life. She, too, saw me, and I shall never forget the look that came into her face when her eyes met mine across the crowd. But next minute, when I forced my way through the crush to the very spot where I had seen her standing, she had vanished as mysteriously as if the earth had opened at her feet and swallowed her up."

"Which merely goes to confirm what I said just now, that you were misled by your own fancy."

"No, Charley, I cannot accept your theory," he said. "I had information from another quarter, as you know, that she had been seen on board the English steamer at Dieppe; and where would she be so likely to go as to London, where there was nobody that knew her history and no familiar faces to remind her of what she once had been?"

"Heaven help her, wherever she may be!" said Charlotte fervently.

"I am not without hope that Cornthwaite may even yet succeed in tracing her," went on Hugh. "You know my object, Charley, in trying to find her?"

"I do; and it is just like you to still go on hoping when ninety-nine men out of every hundred would have given up the case in despair long ago. How calmly you talk of it all now! To hear you tell the story, no one would imagine that you had been one of the chief actors in it."

"There was a time when I thought I should never recover from the blow; and now, as you say, I can bear to speak of it as calmly as though I had been a mere spectator of the drama. That like often cures like is a maxim well known to us doctors; and the rule holds good in other things besides medicine."

The rings of the curtain rattled as Charlotte moved uneasily on her seat. "I don't understand what you mean, Cousin Hugh," she said, with a little tremor in her voice.

Hugh puffed away in silence for a little while before he spoke. Then he said, "Charley, do you believe in second love?"

The blind girl's heart gave a great leap, and then seemed to stop beating. She pressed her hand to her bosom, and caught her breath rapidly. Had the moment for which she had longed and prayed with all the strength of her burning, passionate nature come at last? No, no! it was too great, too intense a happiness for a poor, sightless creature like her! And yet—and yet how otherwise could his words be interpreted?

"What a strange question, Hugh!" she said, with a little tremulous laugh. "How can you expect an ignorant, shut-up creature like me to be learned in such matters?"

"In the Court of Love all your sex are special pleaders as of right. The fine instinct of a woman in affairs of the heart is always to be trusted before the common-sense experience of a man. I repeat my question, Charley: do you believe in second love?"

"In certain cases, yes. Where a person's affections have been repulsed or cruelly trampled on; where love has been rewarded by deception or ingratitude; I certainly see no reason why the life of anyone so treated should be rendered miserable for ever. The world is wide, and hearts that are both loving and true are by no means so scarce as some people would have us believe."

"Very fairly argued," said Hugh. "Now for the application. Hem! I myself, Charley—in fact—that is to say—I have decided

to try the efficacy of second love in my own case. How I have fared once already you know as well as I do ; and yet, like a bold mariner, I am going to venture my little all again."

"Oh, Hugh!" She wanted a moment to recover herself. How fast her heart was beating, and how dry and parched her throat was! Why did he not throw away his cigar, and come and put his arms round her and kiss her? But men are so cold and hard, they don't know how to love.

"Yes, Charley," went on Hugh, "not content with burning my fingers once, I must needs put them into the fire a second time. Well, child, have you nothing to say?"

"Does the—does the lady return your affection?"

"Well—hum—yes, I have some reason to believe that she does."

Some reason to believe so! How cruel of him to go on torturing her by this assumption of indifference. But he would—he must—throw off the mask in a little while, and clasp her to his heart, and pour into her ear the sweet poem of his love. "Oh, darling! darling! why do you not come to me!" Scarcely could she repress the wild cry of her poor, passion-tossed heart.

"What a strange girl you are, Charley! Have you no wish to hear the lady's name?"

"Oh yes, do please tell me her name, Hugh! Really and truly I am very anxious to hear it."

He was so wrapt up in his own self-complacency that he did not detect the strange nervous ring of her voice. "Her name is Beatrice Davenant—a pretty name, is it not? She is a younger sister of Miss Davenant, of Irongate House. You remember me speaking about Miss Davenant several times, don't you, Charley? Why don't you answer me? What a strange mood you are in to-night! Charley, I say!" But no Charley answered. "You minx! I'll pay you out for this!" he said, thinking she was playing him a trick ; and taking up the lamp, he crossed the room, and drew back the curtain behind which Charlotte was hidden. "Heavens! the child has fainted." He took her up in his arms and carried her to the sofa, and rang the bell for some water, and unfastened the top buttons of her dress. As he did so, the little locket he had given her on her birthday slipped out of its hiding-place. "What a loving little soul she is—so good and true-hearted!" he murmured to himself. "What made her faint, I wonder? Poor little thing! she is far from strong, and will never live to be an old woman, I fear." He was as utterly unsuspicious of the real state of Charlotte's feelings as though she had been his sister in reality.

Presently Charlotte gave a long sobbing sigh, and opened wide her blue-grey eyes ; but the tender orbs were dazzled by the lamplight, and she closed them again with a look of pain. Hugh motioned to a servant standing near, who turned down the lamp till only a soft yellow twilight shone through the room.

"Is that you, Cousin Hugh?" said Charlotte, stretching out her hand to feel for him.

"Who else should it be, dear?" he replied, as he took her hand and chafed it between his own. "Smell these salts for a little while; they will refresh you. How cold you are! We must get you to bed as soon as possible. Why did you not tell me that you were ill?"

"I am not ill, Hugh."

"What then, Miss Contradiction?"

"Only weary."

"Weary of what?"

"Of everything—of my life!"

"That will never do, Charley. I thought you had too much good sense in that little noddle of yours to find room for such ridiculous ideas. The fact is, you are becoming nervous and low-spirited, through moping so much in the house. We must get you out more into the fresh air and sunshine, and send you to the seaside for a couple of months. Those are the remedies I prescribe, together with a few of those delicious mixtures for the composition of which I am so deservedly famed. But now, to bed. Come, let me carry you there, as I used to do years ago when you were a child, and I a great hulking hobbledehoy. *Allons, ma mignonne!* Your arms round my neck, so. Susan, do you go before with the light."

She put her arms languidly round his neck, and let her head rest wearily on his shoulder, while he carried her upstairs as lightly and easily as though she were a child of thirteen. That brief journey up to bed thrilled her with a strange exquisite sense of mingled pleasure and pain: of pleasure the most intense, at feeling herself encircled by those protecting arms; at being enfolded, as it were, to his bosom, though for ever so short a time: of pain the sharpest, at feeling and knowing that never more, in all the time to come, would such happiness be hers again. Never more! and she loved him so passionately. Soon another head would rest as of right where hers was nestling now—soon——. Oh, why, why had she not died? How could she ever bear to live through all the misery to come?

As they were going up the second flight of stairs, Charlotte whispered in Hugh's ear: "And you are really going to be married, Hugh?"

"I hope so, Charley, and that before I am many weeks older. But bear this in mind, dear," he added, "that your home, now and ever is beneath this roof. My marriage will make no difference to you in that respect, nor, indeed, in any other, except that then you will not want for pleasant society as you do now. You can't long know Beatrice Davenant without learning to love her. Shivering again, I declare! This sort of thing won't do at all."

He carried her into her own sitting-room and laid her gently on the sofa. "Here we are at last," he said. "Susan will stay and help you into bed, and I will make you up a draught to be taken at

once. Don't get up in the morning till I have seen you and given you permission; and now, good-night, dear, and if my prophecy is worth anything, you will be considerably better in the morning. But don't forget the draught."

He stooped and pressed his lips to her forehead, and was gone.

"For the last time, oh, my poor heart! for the last time," murmured the blind girl to herself, as she listened to Hugh's receding footsteps. "His kisses now belong to another; I shall never again feel the pressure of his lips: never again!"

Then she let Susan undress her and put her to bed, and after that she took the draught which Hugh sent up for her.

"Leave the light burning; it will be like company for me," she said to Susan. Then Susan went, closing the door behind her. Five minutes later an intense drowsiness crept over Charlotte, her troubles slipped away from her for a little time and she fell into a sleep, deep and calm, that was unbroken till late the following morning.

Hugh came up to see her before going his rounds, and pronounced her better, and gave her permission to get up should she feel so disposed. But Charlotte did not feel so disposed. All that day she lay in bed, thinking, thinking, thinking. She was waited upon by the assiduous Susan, but beyond a little wine-and-water now and then, or a few grapes, nothing passed her lips between sunrise and sunset. But when the day was darkening to its close she told Susan that she should not want her any more till morning, and bolted the door behind her, and so secured herself from further intrusion. Then, from one of the many little drawers in an open cabinet that stood in one corner of her sitting-room, she took a box of opium pills, which she had purloined from Hugh's surgery downstairs, a room in which Charlotte, from long experience, was quite at home, having spent many a pleasant hour there with Hugh, while he was mixing his draughts or manufacturing his pills; and in which, blind though she was, she could have found almost any drug or medicament on the shelves, having learnt to distinguish them by their smell. Neither was she wanting in a knowledge of the properties of many of them, thanks to her own inquisitiveness and to Hugh's good nature in answering her questions.

Having swallowed a couple of the pills, Charlotte got into bed again, and in a little while was fast asleep. She slept till the clock was just on the stroke of one, and then she awoke suddenly and completely. For a quarter of an hour after she awoke she lay as still and moveless, except for her breathing, as one dead. Then she got out of bed stealthily and swiftly, and going to the same oaken cabinet from which she had taken the box of pills, she took from another drawer a lancet, which had formerly been her father's, together with a small, old-fashioned china mug, which had been a birthday present to herself when quite a child. From her writing-desk she next produced a sheet of note paper and a new quill pen; for

Charlotte, assisted by an apparatus for the use of blind people, wrote occasionally to the one or two old schoolfellows with whom she cared to keep up a correspondence. The night was dark and starless, with a dull moaning wind that blew dismally in hollow gusts around the old house. But light or dark was all as one to Charlotte, who would often frisk and dance and sing about her own rooms during the uncanny small hours in a way that would have considerably astonished her cousin Hugh, had he ever caught her when thus on the wing.

Taking the lancet, the china mug, the note paper and the quill pen, Charlotte seated herself at the table, and having rolled up the sleeve of her night-dress, she deliberately proceeded to puncture herself in the arm between the elbow and the shoulder. The blood came freely, and fell, drop by drop, into the china mug which she held to receive it. Her white, sharp little teeth were firmly locked, and all her features were set and stony; but not a nerve in her body quivered, and her heart beat evenly and calmly. When satisfied that her arm had bled sufficiently for her purpose, by means of her disengaged hand and her teeth she bound it up firmly with her handkerchief. Then spreading out the paper before her, she dipped her pen into the mug and wrote the following words in crimson letters, that were large and irregular, but legible to any one who could read at all:

"I WILL KILL HER!
"I SWEAR IT!
"CHARLOTTE.
"*Aug. 5th.*"

When the words were written she put down the pen, and sat very quietly waiting for them to dry. Then she folded the paper into a small compass and tied it up with a couple of long hairs plucked from her head. Then taking it in her hand, she went out of her sitting-room and up the stairs that led from the landing outside, and so into the loft at the top of the house, of which mention has been already made. The skeleton, invisible in the dark, was still keeping watch and ward, like a sentinel in his box, at the entrance to the loft. Charlotte felt for him, and grasped his bony hand as soon as she found herself in the room. "Good-morrow, Monsieur le Capitaine," she said. "I have a little matter here which I wish to entrust to your keeping. You never tell tales, I know: so secret and confidential!"

Finding herself not tall enough to carry out the purpose she had in view, she fetched a chair from another part of the loft, and having mounted it, she proceeded to hide away the paper on which she had written in one of the orifices of the grinning skull before her. "You will never tell, will you, my dear captain?" she said, with that little cold-blooded laugh in which she rarely indulged except when alone.

"What a funny darling you are!" she added. "Too thin to be altogether handsome, you know; but still with something *distingué* about you, and entirely unconventional. If you could but come out into the open and have a waltz with me, how delightful that would be! But perhaps you are above such frivolities, and very proper too for a gentleman of position, such as you are. You are, however, far too good-natured to object to your poor Charlotte making a teetotum of herself for a little while. I am so light-hearted to-night that I must dance, or I think I shall go mad."

Having found the musical-box, she proceeded to wind it up, and as soon as it began to play she put it down in the middle of the floor. The air it played was one of the Elfin waltzes, and Charlotte, with the trailing skirts of her night-dress held daintily up between thumb and finger, so that they could not impede her movements, began to gyrate round the room in time with the music.

"What a heavenly waltz!" she murmured. "My soul seems to languish and die within me as I listen. If Hugh could see me now, he would think his house was haunted by a ghost that had lost its wits. Oh, for a partner, were it only a will-o'-the-wisp!"

Susan, the housemaid, in her chamber below, waking some time during the dark hours, heard the faint echo of Charlotte's witch-like laughter, and shuddered as she heard. "If anybody was ever in league with the devil, that girl is!" she muttered; and then she buried her head under the clothes to shut out the unholy sound.

CHAPTER XXIII.

IN GOOD SOCIETY.

THE Midsummer vacation at Irongate House was over; teachers and pupils alike had returned to their duties; but Beatrice Davenant took no part in the busy scene beyond that of a looker-on. Miss Easterbrook had insisted that she should remain at Irongate House as a guest, and not as a teacher, during the short time that would elapse before her marriage, so that none of the Helsingham busybodies need know that it had ever been intended that she should become an assistant in the school—a little act of diplomacy on the part of Miss Easterbrook to secure Beatrice at starting as good a position as possible in the small but somewhat exclusive circles of Helsingham society. No one, indeed, could have entered more warmly into every phase of the affair than did the worthy schoolmistress, urging Margaret into setting about the preparations for Trix's wardrobe without delay, and claiming for herself the privilege of presenting the bride with her wedding outfit.

Mrs. Cardale, with whom Trix was a great favourite, had promised to attend the wedding; but a few days after the commencement of

term she called at Irongate House to inform Margaret that circumstances had put it out of her power to do so. "I have just received a letter from my aunt, Mrs. Stewart, who has been staying at Pau for some time," she said. "She and I have not been on intimate terms for several years; but now that she either is or fancies herself to be slowly dying, she has written me a kind and loving epistle, pressing me earnestly to go to her with as little delay as possible. I have no choice but to accede to her request; it is merely leaving England three months before my usual time for flight, and, as the case is, I shall hardly be back at Helsingham before spring. Robert has to go to London next Monday on business, and it is decided that I shall start with him. To be obliged to leave before the wedding is a real disappointment to me. All I can do under the circumstances is to insist on you and Beatrice coming to Brook Lodge and spending a day with me before I go. To-day is Wednesday. Will you come on Friday? Now, do promise. That will be the day of the flower-show, and we can all visit it together. I will send the brougham for you at eleven."

So it was arranged; and by half-past eleven on the forenoon of Friday, Margaret and Trix found themselves at Brook Lodge. In due time came luncheon, and when that was over they set out for the show, which was held in a pretty nook of Sandilands Park. The day was warm and sunny; the display of flowers was tolerably good; the town and country cliques mustered strongly, as on a common ground of vantage; and the inevitable brass band discoursed music that was more noisy than sweet. Mrs. Cardale found many acquaintances, to most of whom she introduced Miss Davenant and her sister; and before long numerous inquiries were fluttering about among the company on the lawn respecting the two sisters, whom the once-fashionable and still charming and exclusive Mrs. Cardale was chaperoning with such evident *empressement.* Mrs. Cardale, when introducing Margaret and Trix to any of her well-to-do friends, said nothing as to their humble position in the social scale, simply because she did not think it necessary to do so, and not from what would have seemed to many people a natural reluctance to venture on such a confession before so fashionable an audience; as was clearly proved a little later in the day, when Mrs. Cardale was joined by Mrs. Chillinghurst, of Pingley Dene, one of the county luminaries. The two ladies had been at school together a quarter of a century before, and the friendship between them had been of a texture stout enough to withstand the wear and tear of the world during all those years.

"By-the-bye, Henrietta," said the county lady, after a few inquiries respecting health and other private matters had passed to and fro, "who are those two sisters whom you introduced to me about an hour ago? and where do they come from? Nobody here seems to know them."

Mrs. Cardale answered her friend's inquiries as clearly and succinctly as possible.

"Ah, you always were a great collector of curiosities," remarked the other. "With your levelling, democratic tendencies, I think it a great pity that you did not live in the time of the first French Revolution. Then, you would have been appreciated; now, I am afraid the world will merely put you down as eccentric."

Mrs. Cardale smiled sweetly. "You are quite oracular to-day," she said. "You talk as one might fancy one of the figures out of 'Le Follet' would talk, were it alive; and are becoming as thoroughly artificial as the roses in your bonnet. And now that we have finished our compliments, let me hasten to tell you, before we are interrupted, that I want you to do me a very special favour."

"Command me in any way, Henrietta. I am entirely at your service."

"I know that, dear, or I would not ask you. Now listen attentively. I have already told you that the younger Miss Davenant is shortly to be married to Dr. Randolph, whom you know, if not personally, at least by reputation, as a very clever young surgeon. Now what I want you to do is to take the youthful Mrs. Randolph by the hand, and give her the benefit of your countenance and protection on her entrée into Helsingham society. I want you to give her a ticket for the Assembly, and also to invite her and her husband to dine once or twice at Pingley next winter. Will you do this for me, dear?"

"Really, Henrietta ——" began Mrs. Chillinghurst, and then she stopped. "The wife of a common country surgeon, you know! What would the county say?"

"You are strong enough and daring enough to defy the county, and to glory in the deed. You have only to write 'Maria Chillingham, her mark,' opposite the name of anyone; and, however humble and unknown to fame such a person may previously have been, she is from that moment gathered into the fold of the fashionable elect, and is thenceforth free of all its mysteries. But all this you know as well as I."

"But the wife of a common country surgeon, Henrietta! Consider. The difficulties would be very great, and a fiasco would render me ridiculous for ever."

"Look at that vulgar wife of Dr. Chubb. She goes everywhere."

"Yes, but you seem to forget that Dr. Chubb is physician to Lord Borrowash, and that goes for something. Besides, however vulgar Mrs. Chubb may be (and I am not going to deny her vulgarity), she comes of the Castle Wingfield family, a fact which carries with it a certain weight in society."

"I still repeat that you are strong enough, and daring enough, to do this, if you only choose to buckle on your armour for the fight. And think of the glories of victory! The girl herself will do you

no discredit. There is not a sweeter face here to-day; her manners are naturally good; and if she wants that last coat of varnish which contact with society alone can give, she has insight and adaptability, and you will find her a pupil of whom you will soon be very proud."

"What a pity she is not going to marry into a better position!"

"Perhaps so, in one sense; but Dr. Randolph is a rising man, and his name will one day be widely known. Well—to be, or not to be?"

"Oh, I will do what I can, of course, since you make such a point of it. At the same time, I must tell you very plainly that the prospect is by no means a pleasing one to me."

When our three ladies got back to Brook Lodge, Mrs. Cardale found a note from her brother, in which he stated that he had been unexpectedly called from home, and should not be back in time for dinner, but as soon after as his business would allow of. So Mrs. Cardale and her guests dined cosily together, and very merrily too, despite the absence of Mr. Bruhn, who, however, reached home in time to join them over their tea in the drawing-room.

"Now is Robert himself again," said Mr. Bruhn, as he gave back his empty cup and saucer. "Yes, thank you, I will take another cup, only not quite so sweet this time. You didn't ask me to take any more, do you say? Then, I'm sure that was an oversight on your part, and my reply was given just the same as if you had asked me. Only a superior mind can appreciate the delicacy of my reproof for your forgetfulness. Miss Beatrice, here, looks quite mystified. I am afraid she is one of those worthy people who don't possess superior minds."

"You must not notice my brother's nonsense," said Mrs. Cardale, smilingly, to Trix. "Apparently he is in one of his ridiculous moods to-night. At such times his mind resembles what my friend Lady Parsons would call a 'rude unformed chaos,' and there is no accounting for either his sayings or doings. I wish he had been considerate enough to have dined at home to-day, knowing how much it was my desire that he should do so."

"Considerateness had nothing whatever to do with the matter," answered Mr. Bruhn. "I was called away on business that admitted of no delay. I regret that I was unable to reach home earlier; but now that I am here, you ought, all of you, to make much of me, and strive your utmost to erase the disappointment from my memory."

"To hear you talk, Robert, one would take you to be the most egotistical mortal in the world," said Mrs. Cardale.

"You flatter me, dear," answered her brother. "I like a good, strong, manly egotism. It gives backbone to a fellow."

"And is merely another name for selfishness," retorted Mrs. Cardale. "After that, I think a little music would be a pleasant change."

"By all means a little music, if Miss Davenant will so far favour us," said Mr. Bruhn, eagerly. "I have not forgotten the last time you played to us. It was really a treat."

Margaret always complied cheerfully with such requests, and this evening she sat at the piano for upwards of an hour, playing Mrs. Cardale's favourite pieces one after another, and quitting the instrument at last before her hearers were tired of listening.

"Robert has paid you a greater compliment than he often pays me," said Mrs. Cardale, as Margaret left the piano. "Not unfrequently he goes off into a sound sleep while I am doing my poor best to please him."

"Too true—too true," assented Mr. Bruhn. "But I take it as a great proof of Etta's musical talent that she can thus charm this savage breast, and soothe me into a slumber as sweet as that of any babe."

"Hypocrite!" sighed Mrs. Cardale. Then, turning to Margaret, she said, "I have been begging and praying of Robert to steal a holiday for a few weeks, and accompany me to Pau. But, no—his excuse is, work—work—work. He professes that he cannot leave that wretched business to take care of itself even for a month, when he might, were he so minded, leave it for ever, and enjoy life as he ought to do with the means at his command. Really, there are times when I have no patience with him."

Mr. Bruhn turned to Miss Davenant.

"How rarely," he observed with a smile, "do women show any interest in, or have more than the vaguest knowledge of, the occupations or professions which engage for so many hours each day the time and thoughts of their husbands and brothers, and on the successful pursuit of which their own home comforts, nine times out of ten, so absolutely depend. My sister here, for instance, cannot understand that it is a pleasure to me to find myself at the head of a large concern, such as mine is; where three hundred workmen look up to me as their employer, and are dependent on me, in a great measure, for their daily bread. Nor that it is far sweeter to me to be a busy manufacturer, earning money by my success in trade, than it would be to be an idle fine gentleman, lounging about the Continent, or dawdling from one country-house to another, without any definite aim or object in life. She cannot see that what I value more than the actual money I make out of my business—being already pretty well-to-do in the world, and having no child to succeed me when I die—is my capacity for making it. Besides this, there is the sense of power, and of responsibility, as being the head a large concern—and power is sweet to the souls of men. Mine a dull, plodding, unenjoyable life! Cannot you understand that my morning's ride is all the pleasanter to me from knowing, that for several hours after it is over I shall be shut up in a close office? Cannot you comprehend how of an evening my news-

paper, my book and my cigar are made all the sweeter to me from the knowledge that I have been working hard all day, and have duly earned them? A holiday now and then if you please; but as a rule, plenty of hard work: such, as it seems to me, is the only way for anyone to appreciate and enjoy—yes, my dear sister, enjoy—life, who cannot content himself with merely skimming its surface, as a sea-gull skims the waves."

Margaret's face was turned towards him as he ceased speaking.

"I, too, think," said she, "that all of us, both men and women, ought to have some firm anchorage in life, some definite object for which to strive, and put forth our best endeavours. The culture of the beautiful, as I take it, should always be held subsidiary to the serious, downright business of life. The acanthus-leaves that crown the column are left unchiselled till the long, bare shaft itself has been hewn and polished by patient toil."

"Really, I seem to have roused quite a hornets' nest about my ears," said Mrs. Cardale, "and all because I happened to say that I could not see the necessity for Robert to work as hard as he does. But here is Miss Beatrice, sitting as mum as a mouse. I hope that she, too, is not going to prove to be what somebody calls an 'Apostle of Labour."

"No, indeed," answered Trix, blushing and smiling at the same time. "I am afraid that if I were rich, I should be of just the same opinion as you are—that it is both wiser and pleasanter to travel about and see the world—to study the beautiful in nature and art wherever it is to be found—than to stay at home from year's end to year's end, while one's mind gradually narrows to the limits of the little circle in which we live, or becomes so saturated with the idea of one's own importance, that it seems never quite able to forget that miserable little fact. How I long to travel!"

"Only to come back at last, weary of the great world, and find that the sweetest wisdom is that which is hived at home," said Margaret.

"If Miss Beatrice is going to preach the doctrines of the *far niente* school," said Mr. Bruhn, "I, for one, shall begin to tremble for my faith."

As Margaret Davenant quitted Brook Lodge that night, she could not help sighing to herself, to think how many months must pass before she could hope to cross its pleasant threshold again.

"Not till Mrs. Cardale comes back next spring shall I re-enter these doors," she said.

But on that point she was strangely mistaken.

(*To be continued.*)

IN THE LOTUS LAND.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "Through Holland," "The Bretons at Home," etc. etc.

Sebek.

ALL people of the earth, the most remote tribes, the most savage and barbarian, have felt, as far as is known, an innate need for worship; a desire for something far above themselves; a craving for an Ideal, all-powerful and miraculous, that would bestow upon them the fruits of the earth, the blessings of prosperity. All people and tribes seem to have recognised the existence of some sort of religion; to have possessed some innate consciousness of the immortality of the soul, of life beyond death, and of the doctrine of Retribution. This instinctive belief has been so universal that it would almost seem to have been handed down from some primeval race possessed of Divine favour and revelation: such, for instance, as was given to Adam, who, in the days of Eden and innocency, was admitted to the knowledge and, it may be, the friendship of his Creator, and was intended for an existence in which sin, suffering and death had no part.

The savage tribes of the earth, with their cannibal propensities almost placing them lower than the animal creation, form one of the inscrutable mysteries of our present state of existence, in which mysteries abound. That these savages should exist at all seems degrading to a higher and more civilised race, actuated by everything that is refined and elevated. Yet that they form part of the great brotherhood of mankind is proved by their openness to conversion, their susceptibility to influence. Some of the wildest amongst them have become some of the best, most earnest and most consistent of Christians. Yet the mystery of their condition remains unfathomable, amongst the "deep things of God." Why man, made in the image of God, should have been permitted to fall from his first estate is a question we ask ourselves whenever we are brought face to face with the subject, and the answer must be left to that day when, the veil raised, we shall no longer see through a glass darkly. Whether it is part of the terrible penalty of original sin; whether a divine visitation upon a special people; or whether designed for the purpose of

showing forth the power of Christianity and the loving-kindness of the Almighty in some indirect manner not evident to our limited views; this we can never know. We cannot solve the mystery; but we can leave it in faith, assured that it must be to serve some great purpose of which the final end is Love: for David has said, "Thy tender mercies are over all Thy works." We cannot see the end from the beginning even of our little life, or of a single year of our life; therefore, the Divine plan for the ordering of the universe may well be altogether past man's understanding. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

The necessity, we repeat, for worshipping *something* seems always to have existed; and exists, no doubt, in some form, amongst the undiscovered and most barbarous tribes of the earth, if any remain. It is often a rude, cruel belief—the doctrine of propitiation, demanding the mutilation of the body, the sacrifice of life: for Love is only the doctrine of Revelation. But this, after all, is only the idea that the monks and pilgrims of a more enlightened condition carried out in the middle and yet more recent ages; torturing themselves by a hundred petty inflictions, including life-long vigils and withdrawals into convents and monasteries from everything that makes life and the world beautiful; all things that were given us richly to enjoy. These men for self-sacrifice and self-denial, substitute self-torture and persecution. No savage tribe was ever more relentless than the Inquisition, with its refinement of cruelty and its secret agencies.

With some heathen tribes, religion is the worship of the sun; with others the worship of the moon and stars; with the Indians and the Chinese, who are civilised as well as heathen, it is the worship of images of wood and stone; marble deities with a mild and placid expression, a serenity suggestive of power and a benevolence encouraging to a doctrine of wrath; vengeance that has to be conciliated by slaughter and bloodshed. Juggernaut still claims his worshippers and the car its victims.

In going back to the oldest people of whom we have any record—the ancient Egyptians—we find their religion was of a very mixed character. It contained much that was ingenious and a little that was beautiful. And we are frequently not a little startled at the faint conception, the slight foreshadowing of some of the fundamental principles of our own creed; as though here again, true religion, the one true doctrine, had in ages even more remote than the Egyptians, been known and practised, and had become lost as men gradually fell away from the worship of the One True God, and, like the Israelites in the desert, made themselves golden calves and images of wood and stone. It is impossible to say that this was so, but it would explain much that is remarkable in the worship of the Egyptians.

It is difficult to trace back the religion of these ancients, and to

thoroughly understand the meaning of many of their rites and ceremonies. They were essentially a symbolical and mysterious people, and took the utmost pains to disguise their thoughts in unusually complicated hieroglyphics. The key to these has not been fully discovered, probably never will be. Nor does it very much matter. We are all interested in the *History* of Egypt, and the hieroglyphics concerning it, not being mysteriously recorded in the language of the priests, have been interpreted, thanks in the first instance to Dr. Young, in the second to Champollion. But their *worship* their rites and ceremonies, concern us less; and of these we know sufficient to dispense with the unknown.

Different forms of worship frequently bore the same name; where nothing was true and stable, the religion was frequently changing. New rites were constantly being invented to suit the needs of progressive people, and new gods were created for the same reason. They had some idea of true religion, but they were as people groping in the dark, whilst fancying themselves in the full blaze of enlightenment. The amount of trouble they took for their gods, the labour and wealth devoted to honour them, may serve as a lesson to many a latter-day community. On the other hand it may be urged that theirs was a religion of sacrifice, whilst Christianity is one of mercy, in which the One Great Sacrifice, once for all, has been paid; even as the Jews also are given to good works from a propitiatory point of view, considering their ultimate salvation to depend upon them; whilst the good works of Christians are offered simply as a mark of gratitude to Him whose mercies are new every morning.

The religion of Egypt in the course of time grew so complicated and involved that only the High Priests and the learned thoroughly understood it; the faith of the people remained primitive and rude, and they followed very much as children. The great temples that we hear of, and of which so many ruins remain on the banks of the Nile and elsewhere, were not built for the purposes of general worship, the assembling together of the people, so strictly enjoined upon the Christians. They were temples erected in the honour of the god or gods whose name they bore; monuments frequently existing merely to hold some image of wood or stone, that was supposed to rule over certain of the destinies of mankind. Only the high priests entered these temples and offered sacrifice to the idols; the people had no concern in the matter. But the people in their way were deeply religious and superstitious, and all Eastern people ever have been; their love of the mysterious, the superstitious element in their nature and the warmth and vividness of their imagination combining to render them specially receptive of rites and doctrines affecting the unseen world and future state.

As their religion grew more and more complicated and less and less widely understood, it fell into what was called the Esoteric Doctrine; the very word meaning hidden or mysterious, and limited,

in contradistinction to Exoteric, external and widespread. The followers of the Esoteric doctrine believed in matter rather than spirit; everything was evolved out of matter, which was eternal and immutable, capable of changing its form but not its properties. Matter itself was endowed with thought and creative power. It is difficult to conceive a more senseless belief, incapable of raising the world to higher good, or influencing the lives of its followers. For this very reason—the impossibility of bringing the complicated mysteries of the Esoteric doctrine to bear upon the understanding of the people, the Exoteric doctrine was established—a more outward and visible form of religion, in which the various phenomena in

CHNUMIS. ISIS. AMEN.

Nature, such as the sun, moon and stars, light, water, the fertile earth herself, were embodied in forms of wood and stone, and thus visibly brought before the popular mind and understanding. The people could realise a statue, but could not grasp an abstract idea. So with these primitive races God was seen in all Nature, animate and inanimate. They worshipped animals, they worshipped the sun and moon. We honour our earthly monarch as of Divine appointment—"King by the Grace of God"—but the Egyptians worshipped their king as an incarnation of God; worshipped him in life and after death. Here the idea is very faintly but distinctly followed by the Roman Catholics, who canonize their best and most religiously illustrious lives, and after death pray to them; each devoted Catholic having his special patron Saint. Another point of comparison between the Roman Catholic and the Egyptian—if it may be permitted to

compare a Christian doctrine with a pagan—is, that in each instance symbolism is a great fundamental principle. The Egyptians were nothing if not symbolical; they delighted in mystery and superstition. If the Roman Catholics did away with symbolism, their creed, or rather its errors, would inevitably fall to the ground, resolved, perhaps, into the beauty and simplicity of the Protestant faith, where outward forms and ceremonies mean so little, and everything depends upon the state of the heart and the inner man.

Nevertheless the various doctrines of Egypt were progressive, and their latest forms of belief and worship were of a higher nature than their earliest—those of which we possess any knowledge and record.

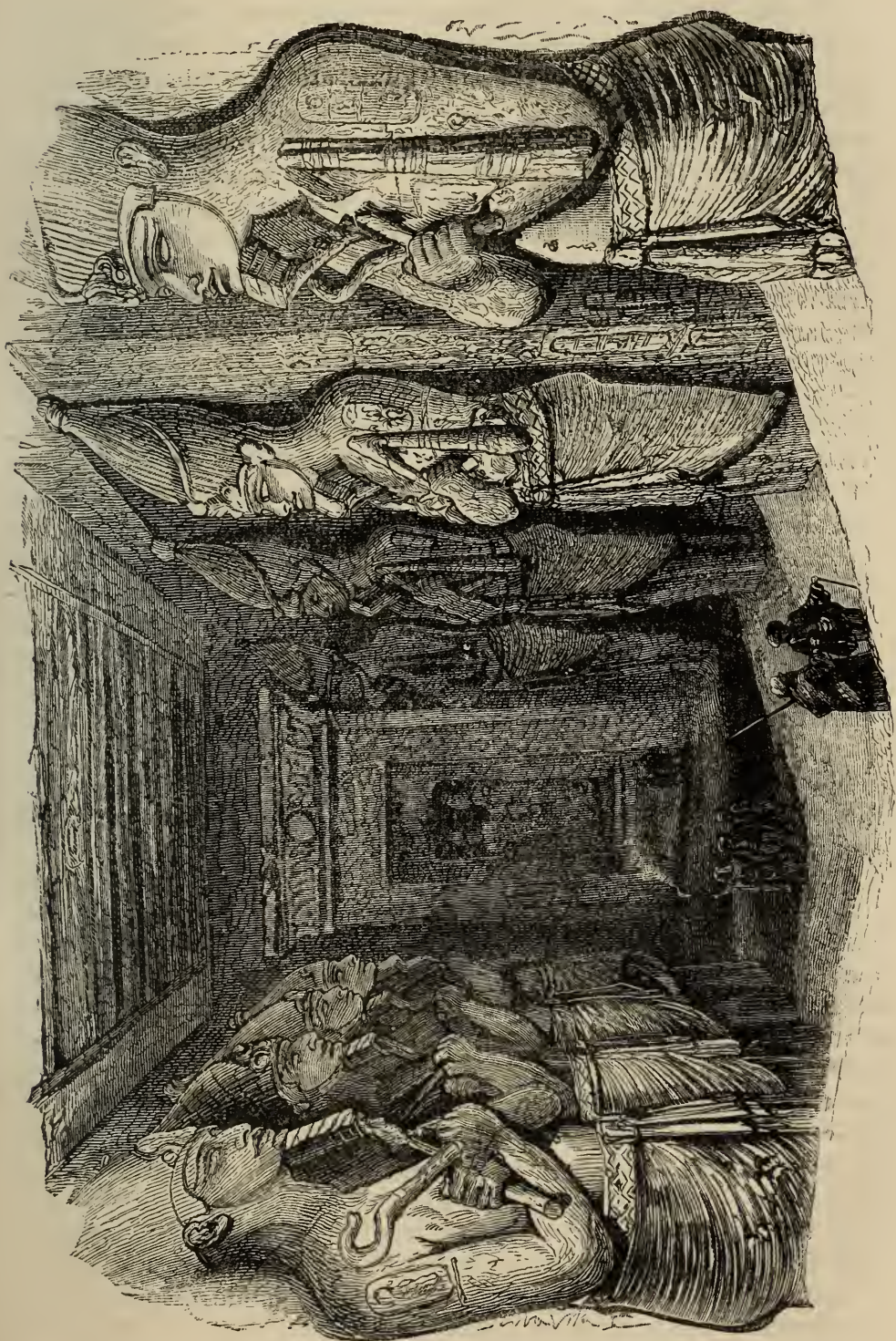
They had two great divinities to begin with: Ptah and Ra: out of which all their other divinities sprang. Ptah, the Creator of the world, was worshipped under various forms. Ra, the Sun, had no less than seventy-five different representations. But even Ptah emanated from a primary source above himself: the source of all life, the first cause of all things. This primary Cause of all was called Nun. The creative power in Nature was called Khepera, and the emblem was the beetle or sacred Scarabæus, with the sun's disk. To this day the Scarabæus is one of the favourite ornaments of the Egyptians, and is often mounted in a setting of outstretched wings, at once an emblem of the flight of time and of eternity. The sun was deified at his rising, noonday stage, and setting. The Sphinx was an emblem of the sun on the horizon. Ra at first appears in the Nun deity under the name of Tum, the evening sun. After his setting he became Khnum, and was reborn the next morning of the Creation, at his rising, issuing in the form of a child from a Lotus flower floating on the Nun.

The Lotus flower was considered sacred, and frequently recurs in their religious symbols: as, for instance in the case of Nefer-Tum, the God of Heliopolis, the "Lord of the World," where he is represented with head of a lion, on which is perched a hawk—emblem of the Resurrection—crowned with Lotus flowers, emblems of purity.

The blue or white Lotus-flower was indigenous to Egypt, and in early days Egypt was essentially the Lotus Land. Where it is now found elsewhere, it has been borrowed: just as the Papyrus is now found in Sicily and has ceased to flourish in Egypt; just as Egypt herself has borrowed a few trees and flora from other countries. The Lotus flower is now dying out of Egypt, but she will never cease to be the Lotus Land; in the same manner that England, if all her roses left her, would still retain the rose as her emblem.

The evening came before the morning in the mythological creation of the Egyptians; and the infernal regions, or regions of darkness—not of torment—which they believed in and called Amenthes, were created before the regions of light and life. Nun was the Source of Life. Ptah was the creator of all things, Ra, the sun, was the daily renewer of life. Osiris was the principle of light. He was the god

of the lower world, having control over the regions of darkness. Ra was often added to his name. Isis was the fruit-bearing earth.



GREAT TEMPLE OF ABU-SIMBEL.

In different parts of Egypt they had different forms to represent the same god; again, they would have the same form to represent

different gods. The bull Apis, at Memphis, was a symbol of Ptah, the creator of the world; but at On, the bull Men was the incarnation of Ra, the sun.

In the earlier times, as far as can be gathered from inscriptions and hieroglyphics, they did not offer sacrifice or worship to their gods; if they worshipped at all, it was at the tombs of deceased relatives. The worship of the sacred bulls at Memphis and On, was established by Kakaoo, in the second dynasty, 4,000 years before Christ. On was the Hebrew name for Heliopolis, and is frequently mentioned in the Bible. It is recorded in Genesis, for instance, that Pharoah gave Joseph the daughter of Potiphera, a priest of Heliopolis, named Asenath, in marriage. The word Potiphera means "dedicated to Ra," the god representing the sun. It lay in the land of Goshen. The Arabs called it *Ain Shems*, the "Well of the Sun," from its fertile and sunny plains.

The Sun Temple of Ra at Heliopolis was the most ancient and celebrated shrine in Egypt, excepting the Temple of Ptah at Memphis. The rites offered to the deities were lengthy and splendid, and were in honour of all the gods connected with the sun. Osiris, Horus and Isis were specially worshipped, the former as the Soul of Ra, called the Ancient of Heliopolis. Isis and Osiris were the children of Nut, the goddess of space, and of Seb, the god of the earth, and possessed eternal youth. Horus represents the upper world, the regions of light, and is emblematical of the Resurrection, and the triumph of all good over all evil. He is also called the Wing-Expander, and nothing is more common in the setting of jewelry in the present day than the open wings, typical of Horus and the flight of time.

The Mnevis bull, the animal sacred to Ra, was also worshipped at Heliopolis, taking the place of the Apis bull, which was transferred to Memphis.

So also was the Phœnix worshipped, the bird that rose from the dead after five hundred years, and brought its ashes to Heliopolis. The Phœnix was called *bennu* by the Egyptians, the "bird from the land of the palms." The bird, whenever placed by the side of Ra, was a symbol of the soul of Osiris. Ra is generally represented with the body of a man and the head of a hawk, coloured red, above which appears a disk, carrying Uræus, the serpent. Ra was the king of gods, the great universe itself, and the worship of all the other divinities was combined in him. Cats were also held sacred in Heliopolis: a superstition that has not come down to the present day. It was in the great hall of the temple that the wounds of Horus were said to have been healed, received in the conflict with Typhon, one of the most remote of gods, the deity of war, and the special protector of foreigners: and Aphrodite was his goddess, so called by the Greeks. When Egypt was unfortunate in her wars, as she eventually became, they considered that he had ceased to be favourable to them, gave up his worship and erased his name from their monuments.

The foundation of the temple of Ra is lost in antiquity. Only that at Memphis is of earlier date. Amenemhat I., first king of the Twelfth Dynasty, founded the Sun Temple at Heliopolis, but it was only completed in the reign of his son, Usertesen, who placed in front of it the obelisk that is still standing, and, with a few ruined walls, is all that remains of the ancient City of the Sun.

The surrounding plain, not of great extent, is barren and desolate. It is impossible to conceive that here once existed one of the most famous, most magnificent cities of Egypt; a city given up to splendid palaces and gorgeous temples; where the rites and ceremonies of the Egyptian religion were for ever being celebrated with a lavishness and completeness only equalled at Memphis. To-day it is a spot desolate and abandoned; a few pale crumbling walls repose in silence and solitude; walls so much the colour of the sandy earth that you cannot always distinguish one from the other. A few solitary palms stand out against the great expanse of sky; the obelisk raises its venerable head in lonely grandeur, pointing to the heavens and reading its moral. It is the oldest of all the discovered obelisks, excepting a very small one found by Lepsius in the Necropolis of Memphis: of date anterior to the one in Paris, or to Cleopatra's Needle, which originally came from Heliopolis. These obelisks were always erected in pairs, and were destined to serve two purposes: they broke the monotony of the outline of the temple walls by their direct contrast; and they offered an excellent surface for inscriptions recording the greatness of kings, their victories and virtues. They were also considered emblems of the sun's rays.

Soul Revisiting its Body, Holding the Emblems of Life and Breath.

The solitary obelisk now standing in the lonely plains of Heliopolis is of red granite of Syene. It is sixty-six feet high, and with no object near it to suggest comparison, looks even higher. Its companion fell in the twelfth century, and was probably gradually broken up, for no trace of it remains anywhere. In these days a fallen monument would very soon disappear under the hands of the legion of tourists o go about with a pocket-hammer and chisel in order to chip off

the nose of a tempting cherub, or fragments of the wing of an ancient phœnix. And, alas, the Phœnix does not rise again from its ashes in these days, whatever it may have done in the days of the early Egyptian dynasties. The private museums existing in various parts of the world are sufficient to plunge the real lover of antiquities—who is ever conservative, not destroying—into the regions of hopeless melancholy.

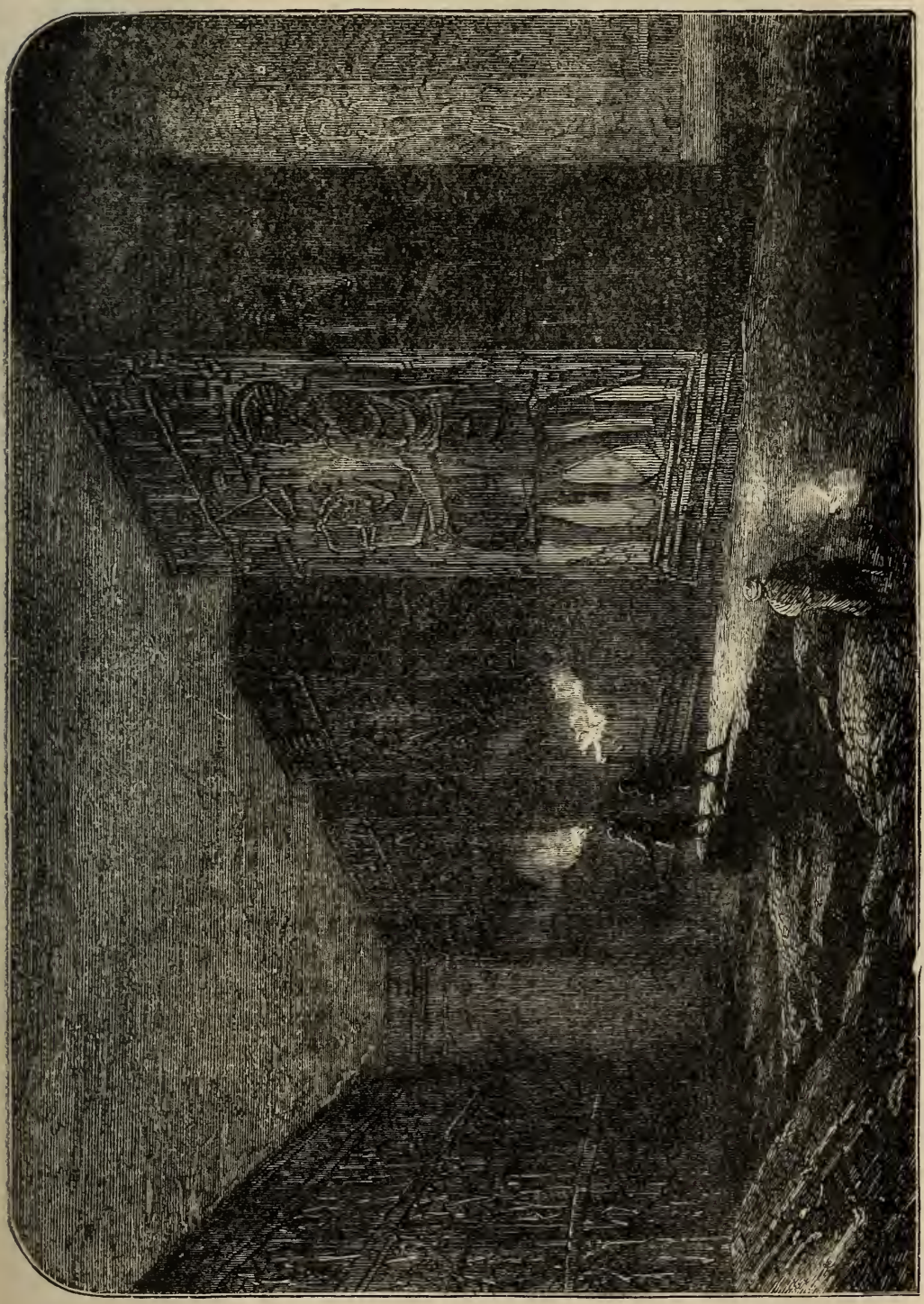
All four sides of the obelisk at Heliopolis bear inscriptions; but two of the sides have been obliterated by the wild bees who have made their cells in the hieroglyphics. This of course could be remedied, but no one seems to care to disturb these industrious little insects, who themselves appear to be antiquarians. Moreover, as each side bears exactly the same inscription—a waste of good material, with which one would scarcely have credited the ancients—it is, as Mr. Toots would say, of no consequence. The two remaining sides which are legible record how Usertesen, King of Upper and Lower Egypt, lord of the diadems and son of the Sun, founded the obelisk on the first day of the Festival of Seti, which was celebrated every thirty years.

The Temple of Ra, near which was the obelisk, was of immense wealth. The Kings presented it with lavish gifts, each endeavouring to outvie his predecessor in generosity and magnificence. As we have said, the Kings or Pharaohs were considered as embodiments or incarnations of Ra, the Sun God, and one of the King's titles was "Lord of Heliopolis."

The staff of priests and servitors connected with the temple is said to have been upwards of twelve thousand: a fact which proves at once the enormous population of Egypt and the vastness of the building. What should we think in these days of a religious building needing only a twelfth or even twenty-fourth part of this immense crowd of officials? In contemplating the power, resources and magnificence of these ancient days, it almost seems as if the world had decayed and degenerated, and was peopled by a race of pigmies, whose highest and proudest achievements would have been passed over in the days of the Pyramids as trifling and unworthy.

The Egyptians were very fond of deifying their animals, and of giving mixed forms to their gods, such as a human body joined to the head of a bird or animal. The nature of each bird or animal symbolized corresponded with the nature attributed to the deity. A certain number of these creatures, birds and animals, were kept by the priests, and after death were embalmed and treated with the utmost veneration. The cow was an emblem of the maternal divinities, because she possessed the qualities of motherly patience and nursing: qualities she has never lost, as all will admit who have watched her calm and expressive eye; the crocodile was emblematical of Sebek, the god who caused the overflow of the Nile, on which the prosperity of the country depended; the hawk was dedicated to

Ra, the Sun god, from its swift flight heavenwards. The goddess of love was portrayed with the head of a lion or a cat. The



TOMBS AT THEBES.

Egyptians evidently did not think as we do, or else these animals, unlike the patient cow, have changed their nature. A lion is the object of

our fear, even if of our admiration, and a cat is certainly not the object of our affection. The cow was sacred to Isis, the goddess of all that was good and beautiful, and Isis is represented as wearing the vulture cap, the cow's horns, the disk of the moon, and the throne; sometimes one or the other separately, sometimes all four symbols in conjunction.

The goddess represented with the head of a lion or a cat was Sekhet, or Pasht, and her duties were by no means confined to the gentler passions. She was a symbol of the burning heat of Ra, the sun, of whom she was the daughter; and in Amenthes, the lower regions, she had to fight against the serpent Apep, and was armed with a knife, the Nemesis who pursued and punished the guilty. She possessed two distinct individualities, corresponding with her names. As Sekhet, according to an inscription at Philæ, found near "Pharaoh's bed," she was vengeful and to be dreaded; as Pasht she was soft, yielding and well disposed. Can we do nothing in these days to restore the lost reputation of the feline world—so long an object of the deepest regard to the Egyptians?

Ra, the sun, was supposed to die every night, when he set and went down into the regions of darkness, and to recreate himself every morning as he reappeared.

As we have said, he had three names, according to his journey through the heavens. At sunrise he was Hermachis, and the Sphinx was his visible representative; at mid-day he was Ra, the period of his greatest strength, his full manhood, or godhood; at night, on going down, he was Tum. During the hours of darkness, his passage through the lower regions, he was Osiris.

Isis, the moon, had not the same variety of names, the same stages of career. She was less important than Ra, of whom she was the sister and the wife, but she came next to him in rank and power. They reigned together, and bestowed upon Egypt all her wealth and prosperity. When Typhon shut up Osiris into a chest and threw him into the Nile, Isis was disconsolate, and sought him throughout the country. She found him near Byblus, and concealed the body. Typhon discovered it and cut it up into fourteen pieces, which he scattered far and near. These fragments Isis collected, and erected a monument on each spot in which a fragment had been found.

Then Horus, her son, went forth to avenge his father.

Osiris was not dead. It was only his body that had been so treated. He himself was reigning in the lower regions, and he visited Horus, and prepared him for battle against Typhon, whom Horus eventually defeated.

Osiris was the principle of light, Typhon of darkness, and Typhon was banished to the infernal regions. The same gods possessed different functions or properties or influences, at different times. Thus at one time, Isis is the moon, at another she is the fruit-bearing earth. At one time Osiris is called the soul of Ra, making

visible the hidden principles of light; at another he is the emblem of moisture, which produces fertility, as embodied in the Nile and its overflow. Typhon is always the opposite to Osiris, endeavouring to counteract his influences. When Osiris is the embodiment of light, Typhon is that of darkness; when Osiris represents moisture and fertility, Typhon is emblematical of drought and barrenness. He prevents the overflow of the Nile, on which Egypt depends; but goodness always conquers in the end; he is vanquished by Horus, the river rises, and the waters spread with wholesome and fertilizing results.

CHONSU.

It is clear that the Egyptians were a religious people, full of thoughtful problems about death and the future state. They firmly believed in the immortality of the soul. In spite of their crude arrangement, the multiplicity of their gods, they were nearer the true belief than appears on the surface at a first glance. They believed in one supreme Being, one original and divine source, mysterious, incomprehensible, from whom all else emanated, matter, soul, intelligence. He was the source of all good, the combater of everything evil.

All this they embodied in symbols. The sacred animals were symbols to them, not objects of worship. They endowed them with divine attributes; each one was supposed to possess within it a small portion of divinity; but when it died, it in no way affected that divinity from which it sprang. They looked upon the world as a drama, having its essence and origin in one supreme Being, who guided the destinies of man and disposed of the soul after death; rewarding the good, punishing the evil.

We see how much of truth there was in their belief, in spite of all their heathenish rites and ceremonies. Their system at last grew so complicated and profound that the people ceased to understand it, and only the priests could interpret the situation. They thought much of life after death, and endeavoured by groping to discover the unknown and the unseen.

Many of their representations, we repeat, were merely symbolical, not to be worshipped; that they were grotesque was the fault of the age they lived in. Beauty and perfection of form and sentiment have been reserved for our own advanced times and ideas. Even some of the greatest painters of the middle ages, though such masters in colouring, are stiff and grotesque in form and outline. And as re-

gards symbolism, we cannot ourselves quite do without it; it is occasionally necessary to enable our finite minds to grasp the infinite and the divine. Thus we have the Paschal Lamb as typical of the Sacrifice of our Lord; we have the spirit of God descending in the form of a dove; the men of this world are compared to sheep and goats; and in the Day of Judgment, the sheep are placed on the right hand, the goats on the left. Life is likened to a river of water, clear as crystal; the remedy for sin and evil to the leaves of a tree given for the healing of the nations. The book of the Revelation teems with symbolism; and the beasts described by St. John in his vision, as being full of eyes before and behind, would be more grotesque upon canvas, and far more terrifying, than anything left behind by the Egyptians.

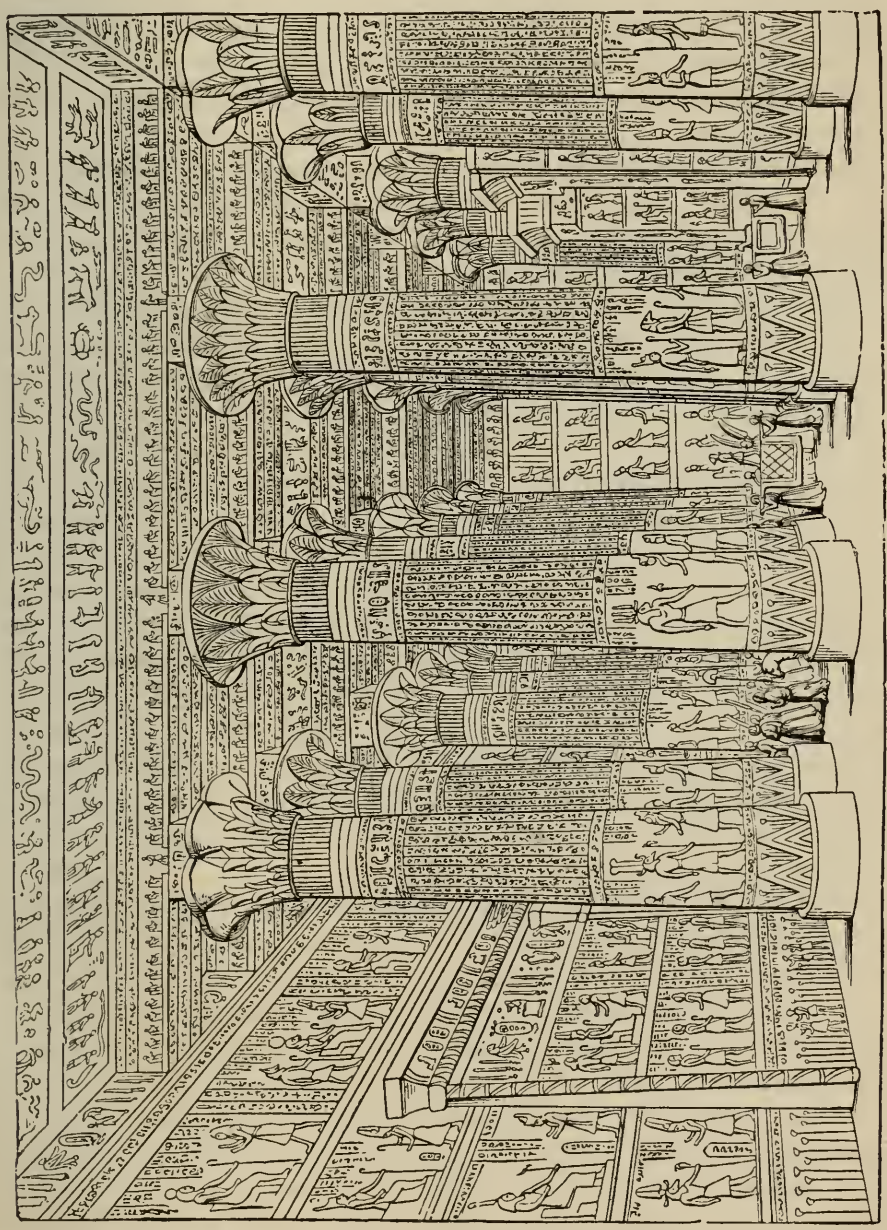
It is certain that these people were profound thinkers, earnest and devoted, with no light to guide them, such as Heaven in its infinite mercy has bestowed upon us. Yet they were not left as heathens. They possessed a deep sense of religion. They believed in heaven and in hell; the powers of good and evil. It is, as we have already remarked, just as though a people living long before them, of whom no record remains, had been vouchsafed divine revelation, with the favour of the One True God, perhaps had even been admitted to a close communion with heaven; a perfect state of existence gradually lost and withdrawn, as man, through sin, became more and more separated from his Maker.

Whatever the reason and explanation, the fact remains that the consciousness of a Supreme and Beneficent Being, a life after death, man's immortality, his responsibility, the doctrine of good and evil, punishment and reward; all this has been grasped and believed in, more or less firmly, at all periods of the world's history, by mankind.

It was firmly grasped by the Egyptians; a great fundamental truth, so mixed up with error, symbolism and barbarism, that the truth itself was almost lost sight of. Like the Children of Israel in the wilderness—and their sin was more deliberate, impatient and inexcusable—they set up their golden calf in a thousand different forms, to the blinding of their eyes and the confusion of their reason. But they were earnest and sincere; they reflected much upon life and its problems; with their whole heart and soul they endeavoured to discover the truth, and to satisfy cravings which they could not understand—an absolute necessity of their being—they made themselves visible gods in the likeness of men and animals, worshipping through them the Invisible. It is also a strange fact that many of these divinities are represented holding in their hand the symbol of the Cross.

In some indefinite manner, these visible objects seemed to them a key to life's mysteries, they made them an answer to questions which, generation after generation, had troubled and perplexed them: just as they would trouble and perplex us if we had not Divine revelation to

guide us into all truth, and to solve for us the mysterious and incomprehensible. They were baffled and perplexed by the existence of good and evil, of light and darkness, of life and death, the constant warfare going on between these opposing elements, and they sought out an explanation. Their polytheism was full of philosophy of a



TEMPLE AT ESNEH.

deep and most earnest description; a plurality of gods, if you will, but all subservient to one Supreme Being, the primary cause of all, unseen, incomprehensible, dwelling in the heaven of heavens. We, who are more favoured, see their errors; but we can also see the great fundamental fact, the feeling of truth, underlying all. The God they believed in was a Being gifted with infinite power and intelligence, perfect

in goodness; he was ONE and undivided; ever the same, unchangeable, the holder of the universe, the creator of all, with neither beginning of days nor end of life, filling the universe with his immensity, everywhere present, nowhere visible. The lesser gods they fashioned were merely His instruments, carrying out His will: rays, as it were, emanating from His glorious attributes. What a sublime doctrine, how near the truth, for a people without revelation; evolved out of their inner consciousness, that craving for truth and immortality which, planted by the Almighty in every human heart, is in itself a revelation and a guide.

As time went on many of their forms and beliefs changed. This was inevitable. They were very much in the condition of a vessel without compass that, having lost its way, steers hither and thither in its endeavours to reach home.

Religion became less simple, more legendary. The Egyptians came into greater contact with the races of the remoter East, whose mystic theologies appealed to their imagination. They created new gods, and many of the old gods were given new attributes.

The new beliefs fitted in well with all their symbolism. New names appear in their records. Osiris still maintained his supremacy, and sacrifices were offered to him rather than to the dead, as had been hitherto. More honour was paid to him, and they formed him a Court to assist in the judgment of the soul after death. Thoth was the recorder, Anubis the watcher, Ma was the impersonation of Truth.

All this was taking place some two thousand years before the Christian era. Every human being possessed three parts: body, soul, and spirit. The soul they called *Sahu*, and *Khu* was an emanation of the divine intelligence—the spirit. Each element was separate and distinct from the other, but combined during the earthly life. Each could be separated from the other if necessary, but their properties were immutable.

After this life, the soul passed within the gates of Amenthes, the regions of darkness, and here had to go through many trials. Battles had to be fought, and all had to be overcome with the "Ritual of the Dead," inscribed upon parchment and placed within the bandage of every mummy. After many conflicts, the soul entered the great hall of justice, where its heart was placed in a balance held by the goddess of truth. The Court was present. Horus conducted the weighing, Anubis, the watcher, was at his post; Thoth entered the record, and Osiris pronounced sentence, aided by his forty-two counsellors. If the proper weight was not reached—if the heart was found wanting—it was condemned to the regions of darkness for a certain period, or to take up its abode in the body of some animal: after which it returned to its original body and began a new life. If, at the second trial, its weight was satisfactory, the soul—not immediately, but after a series of progressions—passed into a final condition of perfect happiness.

It was in the twelfth Dynasty that the great Temple of the Sun was rebuilt at Heliopolis, and the obelisk was first used as an emblem of the sun's rays, and of the creative power which endowed men and animals with life.

The name of the god Amen, the monarch of all the gods, appears now for the first time, a former deity under a new title. He was a local divinity at Coptos, and later at Thebes, and had his dwelling in a distant and mysterious land in the East, a land unknown to man, whose exact position was not revealed. From this land all the gods were said to have come.

It was about this time also that the Great Ritual, or Book of the Dead, was first compiled; a book which grew in volume as time went on. It was intended to facilitate the entrance of the soul into the regions of eternal happiness; to help it in its combats and conflicts with the powers of darkness and evil, which, in Amenthes, would endeavour to wrest it from its ultimate purification. It consisted of a series of prayers and formulas specially adapted for the great purpose to be fulfilled; and altered and added to from time to time, as their religious ideas changed or progressed. A copy was bound up in the swathing clothes of every mummy, and interment could not take place without it. The book, at last, reached great dimensions, and, in a copy possessed by the Museum at Turin, there are one hundred and sixty-five chapters, with long descriptions of the trials of the soul after death. "As the tree falls, so it shall lie," was not the doctrine of the Ancient Egyptians; with them the destiny of the soul, trial, conflict, ultimate loss or gain, all was decided after death; all took place in the regions of Amenthes.

ENTRANCE TO THE TOMBS OF THE KINGS AT THEBES.

The soul, arrived at the Hall of Justice, pleaded its cause, according to this Book of the Dead, before Osiris and the judges, in some such words as these:

"All honour and adoration be unto you, lords of Truth and Justice! All honour and adoration unto thee, Osiris, perfect and great deity! I have come towards thee, my lord and master; I stand before thee that I may contemplate thy perfections! I have committed no fraud or crime towards mankind, when upon earth. I have not oppressed the widow! I have not foresworn myself in courts of justice! I have not set the servant against his master! I have not starved the poor nor caused his tears to flow. I have done no murder! I have not robbed the temples of their bread, nor rifled the dead in their tombs! I have not given short measure, nor taken grain from the fields of the stranger. I have not falsified the scales, nor robbed the children of their inheritance. I have never snared the sacred birds! I am pure! I am pure! I am pure!"

This short extract proves that the Egyptians, according to their lights, possessed a high moral code; were strict lovers of justice, and had very advanced ideas concerning charity and benevolence, which largely entered into their creed. The sacred animals were partly instituted by them as watchers over mankind, in order that they might record his shortcomings, and he might be kept in the right way by the knowledge that hosts of witnesses—seen and unseen—were about him. "A bird of the air shall carry the tale, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter," says Solomon, as if paraphrasing the belief of the Egyptians; and in our own day we laughingly ascribe mysterious rumours to the power of these winged messengers.

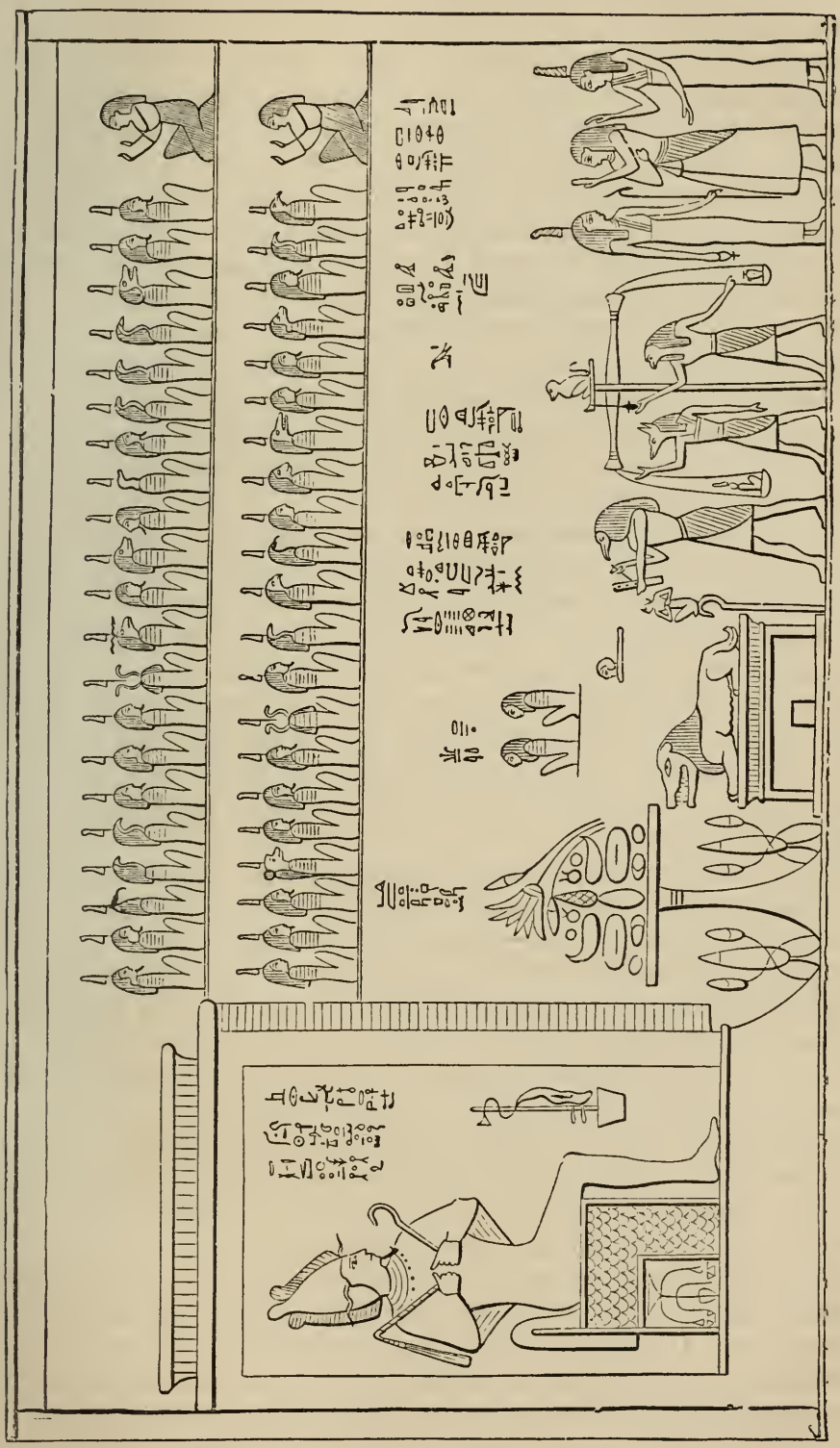
The Egyptians were very exact in their burial. Their tombs were always placed either in the desert or in the side of the mountain: some spot safe from intrusion. They looked upon the tomb as their place of eternal abode, and gave it far more care and consideration than they bestowed upon their earthly habitation. When we see the wonderful and extraordinary labour given to the building of a pyramid, merely as a place of repose after death, we may conceive a little of the reverence and importance they bestowed upon the subject.

But the ordinary tombs were not pyramids, which few but the kings could build.

The earliest tombs consisted of three divisions: an exterior building, consisting of one or more chambers, opening to a long vertical pit or shaft, ending in a third vault or chamber, in which the coffin was placed in a large marble tomb or sarcophagus.

The richer and more important the dead, the more magnificent and ornamental was the entrance to the tomb. The names and title of the dead were inscribed on the lintel, with a petition to Anubis, the guardian-deity of all tombs, praying him to accord the deceased distinguished funeral rites and a good burial-place in the cemetery; to help him in his journey through Amenthes; and to secure him through all eternity the just payment of funereal offerings by those who come after him.

The inscriptions on the walls related to the dead, and were con-



JUDGMENT HALL OF OSIRIS.

fined to the subjects just mentioned. The sarcophagus, where it was possible, was hewn out of the solid rock. Everything was done to

protect the body from violation; and we have seen that one of the soul's chief pleas for favour with Osiris was that he had not violated the tombs of the dead.

The sepulchral chamber was walled up, never to be destroyed, and as far as possible the opening was concealed. The chambers at the exterior portals were used as mortuary chapels. Here the priests and relatives of the deceased assembled once a year to perform their ceremonies and offer their gifts. These walls were covered with carvings or paintings representing scenes in the life of the dead, concluding with his burial. Many of these tombs are probably amongst the ancient relics and remains of Egypt yet to be discovered.

Such are some of the broad outlines of the religion of the old Egyptians; and we find much to admire in their primitive endeavours to solve the mysteries of life and death and immortality; much that was high and noble and worthy of honour; much that has come down to us, confirmed and strengthened and elevated through the revelation vouchsafed to us.

As time went on, their creed became more and more legendary—more involved and complicated. Fresh dynasties brought in new gods—fresh forms of belief. Centuries rolled on, and the world, in the councils of Infinite Wisdom, was growing ripe for Revelation. In the fulness of time, in the reign of Augustus, came the greatest and most momentous event the world has ever seen—the Birth of the Saviour. With this event Egypt is intimately associated, for thither Joseph and Mary took the young Child for protection; and under a Coptic church in Cairo we were shown a spot where they are said to have rested.

Then came a period when the mists and errors of idolatory and superstition melted away, Egypt embraced the pure light of Christianity, and all should have been well with her.

But in the course of time she fell away from her allegiance. Mohammed the false prophet arose, with his singular career. He belonged to a family settled at Mecca, a branch of the noble family of Kureish. His father died before he was born, his mother when he was about six years old. He was then taken in hand, first by his grandfather, next by his uncle. For some years he was a shepherd, a circumstance which caused him to attribute many passages of Scripture as referring to himself. After this he took commercial journeys with his uncle, and at twenty-five married a widow.

At forty he began his career as a leader of men and the founder of a new religion. Egypt at this time was under the dominion of the refined and intellectual but superstitious and idolatrous Arabs. Mohammed suffered from epilepsy, and at these times declared that he had seen visions and received divine revelations and commands. One of his reasons for success was that he believed in himself, and by his extraordinary energy and enthusiasm, convinced others. He was a man of great powers of mind, but quite uneducated. It is

not even certain that he could read or write. He began by converting his own family, and he called his new doctrine El-Islâm, or subjection to God. Persecutions arose, and Mohammed and his followers fled to Medina. Here his wife died, and he then married several other wives. For nearly five-and-twenty years he propagated his doctrine, gained an immense army of converts, fought battle after battle with the Meccans, now victorious, now defeated; until, worn out, he died on June 8, 632, at Medina, and was buried there.

Mohammed took the Scriptures as the foundation of his doctrine, calling himself the true prophet. His creed was embodied in these words: "lâ ilâha ill' Allah, wa Muhammedu-rrasûl-Allah." "There is no God but God, and Mohammed is the prophet of God."

Everything that suited his purpose in the Scriptures he retained; everything that did not, he discarded or altered. The great fundamental doctrine he did not disturb, in so far as that he taught the worship of the one true God, but Him only. With a knowledge of the people he had to deal with, and in accordance with his own sensual nature, he brought in rules and regulations and permitted manners and customs that he knew would appeal to the Oriental temperament. Here again is another reason for his success. The pure and self denying religion of Christ was no longer necessary to the followers of Islâmism. The restraints placed upon them by Christianity were removed. It was no longer a doctrine of progression, of becoming more and more perfect, of overcoming the evil in one's nature by a constant seeking after holiness.

The Koran was compiled from various MSS. gathered together and published in Arabic in the year 635, two or three years after the death of Mohammed. It is a medley of Christian and Jewish doctrines and Oriental traditions. Many excellent doctrines were distorted by Mohammed simply because from his imperfect education he did not understand them; others he turned aside to suit his purposes. It differs from the old Egyptian religion in one essential point, entirely ignoring symbolism. Everything that could possibly degenerate into a mere matter of form and ceremony is avoided.

The Koran is considered the most perfect specimen of Arabic literature in existence. It contains rules not only for heavenly, but for earthly guidance. The points that Mohammed professed were revelations to himself, were taken from the Bible; the new laws, beliefs and regulations introduced were founded upon his profound knowledge of the Eastern nature. He gathered his material from every source; the Rabbinical, the Persian, the Egyptian, the Christian. He inculcated the doctrine of predestination. The Muslims were nearly all born to be saved, all other people to be lost. Thus they take no trouble to convert others, since their fate is sealed and cannot be turned aside.

Hospitality, duty towards one's neighbour, is strictly enjoined. If you eat salt with a Mohammedan you are safe with him. Temperance

is insisted upon. Each Muslim according to the Koran may have four wives; but the unhappy husbands find them such a terrible handful that many only possess one wife.

Every Muslim has to perform a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in a lifetime, to the tomb of the prophet. Outsiders are not admitted; only they who are Mohammedans. A very few have risked discovery by disguising themselves, but it is a dangerous experiment; failure would entail death. In days gone by, the whole distance had to be performed on foot, and the pilgrimage was a severe penance, a great trial of the faithful. Now the greater part of the distance is performed by water and the pilgrimage has become almost an excursion. When arriving towards Mecca, the pilgrims change their garments, substituting for the usual dress an apron and a piece of cloth over the left shoulder. The rites they have to go through last some time. They commence by performing the circuit of the Kába, kiss the black stone, listen to the sermon on Mount Arafat, and stone Satan in the valley of Mina. For the Muslims believe in Satan and in a whole legion of demons which Mahommed specially invented for his purpose and called *ginn*. Before their fall they occupied a middle rank between men and the angels. The earth was created merely by an effort of the divine will, as we ourselves also know and believe. God said, Let there be light, and there was light. The Muslims have a rosary consisting of ninety-nine beads, and every bead represents an attribute of God. The ginn were once in happiness, but falling through pride, an angel was commanded to banish them from their state and condition to the mountains of Kâf, which surround the earth. They occasionally visit the earth, doing much harm to mankind, spreading evil. The angel who banished them afterwards rebelled, and became the devil.

Thus the Koran is compiled, paraphrasing and distorting the Bible: robbing it of its beauty, simplicity and inspiration; though the Muslims also believe strongly in inspiration, and venerate the Koran to the utmost of their power.

The true Muslim prays five times daily. And the hours of prayer are proclaimed by the Muezzins from the minarets of the mosques. No one who has heard the sound in the early morning—perhaps awaking him out of enchanted dreams of Oriental magnificence—will easily forget the thrill with which he hears the clear voice of the Muezzin ringing through the air, bidding the faithful awake and pray. Occasionally it may be heard, yet more startling and thrilling, ringing through the night. This human voice takes the place of bells—the mosques have no bells—and there is much that is beautiful in the idea. "Allah is great," cries the Muezzin. "I testify that there is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is the prophet of Allah. Come to prayer; come to worship; Allah is great; there is no God but Allah." Five times a day is this proclaimed: 1st, a little after sunset; 2ndly, an hour and a half after

sunset, when night has fallen; 3rdly, at daybreak; 4thly, at mid-day; lastly, in the afternoon, an hour and a half before sunset.

The Muslim when praying must remove his sandals and turn his face towards Mecca. He begins by putting his hands to his ears, then holds them below his girdle; he has frequent prostrations and genuflexions, and finishes by turning his head to his right shoulder, then to his left: this to greet the good and bad angels who are ever in attendance upon him, each trying to gain the victory. Once a year there is the great fast, throughout the month Ramadân. From daybreak to sunset, day after day, nothing must pass the lips. They must not eat though dying of hunger, or drink though parched with thirst. But at sunset they may do both, and carry on their feasting if they please throughout the night. Before worshipping in the mosques they must wash; a duty that was imposed by Mohammed more for sanitary than religious purposes. The court of every mosque is provided with a large pool or fountain, and here every worshipper washes his hands, his face and his feet. In the desert places, where water is not to be had, they are allowed to use sand instead, as a sort of figurative or symbolical cleansing.

But in speaking of Islâmism, we are rather wandering away from Ancient Egypt, its people and its religion: and it is here that our great interest lies. Volumes might be written upon the subject, and in a short paper the faintest outline can scarcely be given. Nevertheless, its slightest contemplation is wholesome, interesting and instructive. The more we consider and compare all the other creeds of the earth with Christianity, the more do the perfections of Christ, the holiness, the simplicity, the beauty of His doctrine and teaching stand out as pre-eminently above all others; a doctrine worthy of being our example and admonition. Everything else pales and recedes and falls to the ground before it. Amazed, we feel that here, indeed, is Revelation, here is Truth; the very embodiment of Divinity; the knowledge of a Supreme Being of LOVE, above and beyond anything the heart and intellect of man could possibly have conceived.

And we bow down in adoration, and echo the cry of the Centurion: who, at the supreme moment when the Sacrifice was completed, and from the lips of the dying SAVIOUR came the words "IT IS FINISHED!" and darkness fell upon the earth: exclaimed with the certainty of conviction: TRULY THIS WAS THE SON OF GOD!

TO HIS OWN HINDRANCE.

"WHO'S your friend?" inquired Captain Markham.

It was not the first time that the tall blonde young officer had put such a question that evening. Seated with a solitary companion, at a small table in the crowded dining-room of the Palladium Club, and seeing himself surrounded by a number of faces that looked more or less vaguely familiar (faces belonging for the most part to men celebrated in the world of art and letters, for the Palladium was 'cultured' and non-political), he felt anxious to identify the owners of countenances hitherto known to him only through the medium of photographers' windows, and had been displaying, consequently, for an hour past, a keenness of interest in his fellow-diners which his host found decidedly amusing.

That gentleman answered the young man's last eager question by another.

"Which friend? The black, old personage who nodded to me a moment ago?"

"No, no! The good-looking chap who just went out."

"Oh, that was Carew! In high spirits, apparently, as well he may be. I'd as soon change lots with that youngster as with any man you could find for me in London to-night. Never was there a luckier fellow!"

"Indeed?" Markham ejaculated.

To leave the note of interrogation in the young soldier's ingenuous face unanswered, would have been an act of downright cruelty. Mr. Mereweather, albeit his weekly articles in the *Monday Review* were among the most ferocious appearing in the columns of that pungent journal, was a humane man in private life. He replied good-naturedly:

"A little while ago he was simply a junior clerk in some Government department — I forget which — of whom nobody had ever heard. That book of his literally made his fortune. Society took him up instantly—set him up, rather—and fell down and worshipped him. Already he has such a reputation that he can make what terms he pleases for his work; the publishers are fighting for him as keenly as the duchesses. And as if this were not enough, some obscure relative of his has just been obliging enough to leave him a trifle of sixty thousand pounds! Really, the story sounds like a romance."

"Quite so," the younger man responded. "Carew, I think you said."

"Austin Carew. Surely you must have heard the name before?"

"I'm not sure." Captain Markham's tone was even more dubious than his words. "I may have heard it mentioned. But it's only a

week since I landed, and we didn't get many new authors to read up there among the Chins. I don't know that *I* should care to change places with that fellow particularly," he added reflectively.

"No?" Mr. Mereweather, absorbed in the dissection of his portion of wild duck, scarcely looked up.

"No," with decision. "The run of luck is too prodigious; a *série* of that kind can't go on for ever. I should always be looking out for some sign of a turn in the tide. Perhaps I shouldn't, though," interrupting himself, with a laugh. "If the good fortune were one's own, I suppose one would hardly consider it good fortune—rather the natural reward of transcendent merit, very likely. That is Carew's view of the matter, no doubt."

Captain Markham's conclusions were over-hasty. "That" was not altogether "Carew's view." On the contrary: as this fortunate person, having shut himself into the hansom he had hailed on leaving the Palladium, sped away to his destination—a great party at the house of a great lady, where all that was most distinguished in English politics, art and literature would presently be found assembled together—he felt a very distinct conviction that fate was dealing with him in a manner entirely above his deserts.

With those dealings he was more than content. Being of a simple nature, he had never attempted to conceal from himself his delight in his own success in the world that was still so fresh to him, and the honours which had as yet lost none of their bloom. But it was not upon these good things that his mind was running to-night. He was going to meet the woman he loved—the woman in whose eyes he had surprised, only a few hours since, an acknowledgment which had straightway lifted him to heights of joy unscaled till then of his very imagination. A new and splendid gladness had swallowed up all lesser satisfactions.

He was absorbed in his passion—no wonder! It was the first of his life. He had had his boyish fancy in earlier days, of course—what man has not?—but that was long since dead and buried. He had not thought of it, or its object, for years until this evening, when something in the sweetness of the living present had stirred a train of associations connected with the dead past. Poor little Cecily! what appealing blue eyes she had, and how simple and childlike and unsophisticated was the love affair in which she figured as heroine! The raw young undergraduate going down to the primitive Cornish village to read, and imagining himself to have met his fate in the person of the vicar's little daughter; the boy of nineteen writing bad verses in honour of the girl of sixteen, and exchanging keepsakes and vows of eternal constancy with her under her father's orchard-wall! He had hazy recollections, too, of an affecting parting, and of a subsequent attempt at correspondence; the latter nipped in the bud by a sensible note from the vicar's wife, returning his first sentimental effusion, and requesting him not to disturb Cecily any

further from her lessons. On the receipt of this missive he remembered to have been in despair for three whole days—and then—and then—Poor little Cecily! It was a very innocent memory.

There his reflections ended, for his destination was reached. All his energies became immediately concentrated to one end—that of getting up the crowded staircase, and into her presence as quickly as possible.

Having accomplished this feat, and enjoyed the felicity of exchanging a bow with her where she stood—a slender, lily-like figure in heavy, glistening white robes, her golden head a good inch or two higher than that of any woman near her, for she was "more than common tall"—on the other side of the room, he had to be content awhile with these achievements. She was already surrounded by an eager group; he at once became similarly beset; and more than half an hour elapsed before he could reach her side, and, while he touched her hand in formal greeting, search her eyes for some reminiscence of their confession of the morning. They were very beautiful eyes: still and clear, of a dark liquid grey, touched now and then by flying shadows which deepened them almost to black, and transient lights which brightened them to hazel. It was these eyes—so said the Prince of Bamberg-Dettingen, that famous connoisseur in female beauty—which made their owner, in his opinion, one of the most beautiful women in Europe.

Carew stood beside this women and talked to her of the topics of town: the last political on-dit, the new book that was creating such a sensation in theological circles, the merits of a recently-produced play. Under ordinary circumstances, his companion would have borne her full part in such a conversation. But to-night she was very silent.

"I believe you are tired," the young man said at last, with great gentleness. "I never saw you so pale before."

"I do feel a little tired," she answered, "but I am always pale; that is nothing, and means nothing. I am stronger than I look."

Assuredly she did not look strong. Along with the grace and the queenliness, she had also all the fragility of a lily.

"Suppose we go out on the balcony?" Carew suggested. "It will be cooler there. I saw several people making their way there just now," he added quickly, seeing her hesitate.

She put her hand on his arm in silence—the beating of her heart would not let her speak—and was angry with herself because it trembled, and she knew that he must feel its trembling. She was thankful to find the balcony, which had been covered over and was both wide and deep, but dimly lighted; thankful that the chair he chose for her should be in its darkest and most isolated corner. There at least, neither he nor anyone else could see her face. A proud woman this: one who, although she had found and tacitly acknowledged her conqueror, still shrank from open admission of defeat.

Proud as she was, and fastidious too—else she would hardly have reached her present age of six-and-twenty free in heart and hand alike—she knew that neither behind pride nor fastidiousness could she shelter herself any longer. For here was a man with whom any woman might be proud to mate, a man in whom there was no trace of untruth, no taint of meanness to tarnish the lustre of his gifts. Other men, set beside her white ideal of honour, had invariably shown some flaw, some speck—this man alone had come forth from the ordeal triumphant.

Carew and his companion sat long upon the balcony; speaking little, and that only of the merest trifles. Gradually the other occupants of the place dropped away, drawn back into the house by the strains of a great virtuoso, who was playing in one of the inner rooms, and they were left alone in their corner. Just then she spoke, in a soft, tremulous voice:

"You had plenty of homage to-night. I—I used to fancy you rather enjoyed that kind of thing. Do you enjoy it still? or are you getting tired of it?"

She held her breath for his answer.

"Not in the least," he answered simply. "I haven't had time to get tired of it. As a rule, I must confess with shame that I enjoy it very much. To-night—well, to-night doesn't count. I wanted to get away to something better. To—this."

His honesty had stood her last pitiful test triumphantly. She could have sobbed for joy and relief; and, just because the tears were close to her eyes, she forced herself to laugh.

"Thank you!" she returned lightly. "That was very prettily said, considering you were bound to say something of the kind."

He drew a quick, deep breath. Then he remarked quietly: "I think that was rather ungenerous."

She was silent an instant before replying. "Yes," she said slowly. "You are right. It was ungenerous. Forgive me, please."

For answer he laid his hand one moment upon hers, which rested on the arm of her chair. "It was not like you," he said.

"No," she admitted. "But I am not like myself at all to-night; I don't know myself." She rose hurriedly to her feet. "I—I think we had better go in now," she faltered breathlessly.

But he had risen with her, and now barred the way. "Helen!" he said appealingly. "Helen!"

She moved slightly, and the movement brought her face into partial light. She turned it towards him, pale and imploring, the lips quivering, the eyes full of tears. "Not now!" she pleaded. "Not to-night!"

He drew back instantly. "It must be as you wish, of course," he said submissively, striving to steady his passion-shaken voice. "Will you let me come and see you to-morrow?"

"Certainly." The word escaped her in a whisper; she was barely conscious of having uttered it.

"Thank you." There the colloquy ended.

She turned to re-enter the house, her ears filled with the throbbing of her own heart, unable to see distinctly for a mist of sudden tears. Some light drapery, artistically but insecurely festooned about the open doorway, had become loosened from its fastenings; she caught her foot unawares in a fold of it which encumbered the threshold, stumbled, and would have fallen, had not Carew, who was close behind, saved her dexterously.

"Are you hurt?" he asked anxiously, feeling her tremble.

"No," she answered quickly. "Oh, no!"

She released herself gently from his hold; she moved to pass him by. Her eyes, glowing under their wet lashes, encountered his; she hesitated, paused, and then—neither knew how it happened—but all at once his arms were about her, and he was clasping her close to his breast, and their lips had met and mingled in the passion of a kiss.

For one moment only she lay quivering in his embrace; the next, she was standing beside him again, and took his arm without a word. Together they moved forward into the world, like creatures only half-awakened from a dream.

Carew did not regain his full consciousness till he found himself out of the house, walking homewards through the cool night air. Then he wondered vaguely whether he had done anything very foolish before making his escape. *She* had disappeared immediately, he knew; he recollected hearing her tell someone she was tired, and would like to go home. To himself she had not addressed an additional word; nor, indeed, had he spoken to her—not so much as to say good-night. Their farewell had been taken before.

Their farewell! He shuddered profoundly at the idea of a real farewell between them, and then laughed suddenly at his own folly. Truly he had lost his head in the intoxication of his great happiness! else he would never have conjured up such an impossible phantom as the notion that anything could rob him of her now. The laugh was still on his lips as he sprang up his own doorsteps, and fitted his latch-key to the lock.

His servant came forward to meet him in the hall. "There is a person waiting to see you, sir," he observed, while helping his master off with his light overcoat. "A young lady."

"A young lady!" Carew's voice and countenance alike expressed only the purest astonishment—a fact, which his man, who had looked rather for some sign of annoyance or embarassment, noted with surprise. "Did she give her name?"

"Yes, sir. Miss Gray. She seemed quite a lady, else I shouldn't ——"

"Of course!" Carew interrupted, frowning slightly. "You put her in the drawing-room, I suppose?" And he ran upstairs, three steps at a time. Gray? Gray? His married sister had some connections of that name, whom he knew pretty well. Then there were

Bernard Gray's—his old schoolfellow's—people; and the vicar in Cornwall, too, little Cecily's father—his name was Gray.

He entered the drawing-room as this last recollection rose in his mind. It was half in shadow, lighted only by one heavily-shaded lamp, and he could barely make out, at the far end of it, a little figure starting up from the sofa at the sound of the opening door. He bowed.

"I am sorry," he began courteously, "that you should have had to wait for me—I hope you haven't been here long. My servant tells me ——"

"Austin! don't you know me?" cried a girlish voice.

Carew started violently as his visitor moved impulsively forward into the light, holding out a small shaking hand. "Cecily! Miss Gray! The man said Miss Gray, but I didn't think ——" with difficulty he recovered himself sufficiently to take the proffered hand. "Is it—is it really you?" he asked, rather foolishly.

"Yes, it is the real Cecily," the girl answered, smiling faintly. Now that she stood within the radius of the lamp, Carew perceived her to be still extremely youthful in appearance: in her tumbled, unfashionable cambric dress and shabby little sailor hat, she looked little more than a child. "I am so thankful to have found you," she said, with a half-smothered sob. And then he noticed that her pretty face—it was a very pretty one—was a good deal disfigured by recent tears.

"And I am very glad to see you," he responded, in a kindly, if slightly constrained tone. "But I am afraid you are in trouble? Can I ——"

"I am in the most *awful* trouble," she interrupted, grasping his hand tighter, and looking up at him in piteous appeal. "And, when I tell you, I know it will sound as if I had been false. But, oh! don't be angry with me, please! for indeed, *indeed*, Austin, I was really true to you all through. Only I am such a coward, and you know mamma's determined way."

Distressed, puzzled, and a good deal alarmed to boot, he murmured something incoherent about her having been a child "in those old days."

"Perhaps I was," she rejoined. "But I am sure I cared for you just as much as if I had been really grown-up. And I have never altered—never. Only we got poorer and poorer, and they urged me so to marry him, and I dared not say anything about you, and so, at last, I promised. Oh, forgive me!" She broke down, weeping pitifully.

"I have nothing to forgive," he answered, a strange, terrible shiver creeping over him and chilling him to the heart. "But you must not stand like this. Sit down, and tell me how it is you are here, and what I can do for you."

She was too agitated to notice that his words were singularly unlover-like; she only felt that they were kind. Sitting beside him on

the sofa, still clinging, child-like, to his hand (the seven years that had elapsed since he saw her last seemed to have left her just as much of a child as ever), she faltered out her story.

It was a touching little story, in her artless broken telling of it—touching, and yet so commonplace! The young girl, living on year after year in the secluded Cornish hamlet, faithful to the one bright dream of her youth; too utterly without experience of the world to guess that her lover's memory might be less tenacious than her own, and clinging fondly to the expectation of that time when he should have won fortune enough to return and claim her. In the vicar's crowded home, sickness and increasing poverty; then the kindly doctor who had stepped in with timely and generous help, smitten by the fair face of his poor patient's eldest-born, and developing into the persistent suitor; the girl's resistance to his suit; and the parents' arguments, entreaties, angry reproaches finally, vanquishing that resistance, even to the fixing of the very wedding-day. And, on the eve of this, the poor child, losing all self-control in her passion of repugnance and remorse, ignorant of the rashness of the step she was taking, flying desperately from her impending fate to take refuge with her early lover.

All this Cecily told, and was long in telling it, repeating herself often and frequently interrupting her narrative with bursts of self-reproach. Carew sat and listened, shading his eyes, after the first, with his disengaged hand. Every fresh sentence that fell from the lips of the girl at his side only sealed his fate the more irrevocably; while Cecily spoke, he saw his own doom—and that of another—writing itself out before him in letters of fire. When she finished, and he uncovered his face to reply, it was like the face of a dead man.

He was silent an instant, struggling for the words which in honour he was bound to speak next. There was no evading the truth: he had pledged himself to this simple child. Could he tell her, in the face of the pledge, that he acknowledged no tie between them? Condemn her, most innocent, to be branded with lifelong disgrace, because her affections had chanced to be less fickle than his own? Leave her to bear the unrealized consequences of an act resulting directly from her implicit faith in his plighted word? He could not—even for *her* sake. The man was not made to do such things. Rather, having sworn, he would abide by his oath—even through a worse bitterness than that of death.

Conquering, he rose to his feet, and laid his hand gently on Cecily's bowed shoulders. "Don't blame yourself, my child. You have been sadly tried, and I—I am very unworthy of all your sweet trust and patience. But I will try to be worthy of them henceforward, as your husband, Cecily. For of course we must be married at once." His voice grew so hoarse that he could not go on.

"Married!" Cecily ejaculated, turning very white. Clearly her ideas had not carried her beyond the preliminary step of finding him

and claiming his help. "But—but are you well off enough yet, Austin? You used to be so poor!"

Even in the midst of his mortal agony, the naïveté of the question had nearly made him smile. "I am no longer poor, Cecily," he answered, with an involuntary glance round the luxurious room. "Some money has been left me, lately; and I can make more by writing. There is no difficulty—of that kind." He drew a deep painful breath. "But your parents—I must let them know—you need not be frightened; they cannot coerce you; and probably they will not object now."

"I left a letter for them—to say I had come to you," she murmured.

An hour later, she was calmly asleep at the Grosvenor Hotel, whither Carew had sent her in charge of his old housekeeper, having first informed that respectable person that Miss Gray, to whom he had been engaged for many years, had come up to London to consult him on a matter of serious importance; a family trouble, in fact; and that her parents would join her the following evening.

For himself, he sat up in his study all night, trying to realize that which had befallen him, and utterly failing. The necessity for effort momentarily at an end, he seemed to lose for a time the very power of thinking.

He sat on till his lamp went out, and the mysterious twilight that precedes the dawn began to steal into the room. All through the night he had scarcely changed his position, or lifted his stricken face from its resting-place on his crossed arms. But at length the first rays of sunlight—his window looked East—struck upon his bowed head, and he sat up, the dumb and dull sorrow that had weighed upon him while the darkness lasted all at once exchanged for an intensity of living and maddening pain. Ah! he knew now what he had done, and what yet remained for him to do—that worst, which must be done before the sun was fully up. No time to lose: already the new day had begun—the day on which he was to have asked Helen to be his wife—the day which, before it closed, must see him the husband of Cecily Gray.

He drew a blotting-book towards him, and wrote:

"Do not expect me to day—or at any future time. You will learn very soon why I could not come. Last night, when I left you, I swear before Heaven I believed myself a free man; but now that I find this is not the case, only one course remains to me—that I am taking. At least, I am less dishonourable in breaking my faith to you than I should be if I dared to keep it.

"I do not ask your pardon; it would be a mockery. I know you cannot forgive me. Of one thing only I assure you: as I hope for God's mercy, I sinned unwittingly. I ask you to try and believe this, if you can.

"A. C."

His agony in writing had made his note obscure and incoherent; his will had rendered it bald, brief, and empty of all attempt at self-justification. No such attempt, he knew, could avail him anything with the woman whom he addressed.

He crept out into the still damp and chilly streets, reached the house where she lived, and dropped the letter, shuddering, into the letter-box, where, in an hour or two, they would find it and take it to her—to her! who lay upstairs unconscious, with his kiss yet warm upon her lips, perhaps murmuring his name in her innocent sleep. "Oh God! was I so false?" he groaned aloud in his anguish, as he turned away.

The worst was over now. Through all that immediately followed—the meeting with Cecily's parents (who, poor souls, were not inclined to be too hard upon their daughter when they discovered the eligibility of the *parti* for whom she had thrown over the bluff country surgeon), the hasty marriage, the subsequent departure with his new-made wife for the Continent—he moved with as little excitement and emotion as though he had been acting on behalf of some other person. He could almost have persuaded himself that he was so acting. His old self had died, so he believed, at Helen's door in the grey of the May morning.

Time, of course, soon dissipated this delusion. The old self re-awoke to life, and there was an end for ever of the dead calm which had succeeded its seeming death. Many were the times, during the first year following his marriage, when the mere effort to keep his secret agony hidden from his gentle companion, and to show himself invariably sympathetic and responsive in the midst of the torture at work on brain and heart, proved so great that he nearly broke down under the strain. "A little more of this, and I shall go mad," he said to himself more than once.

He found temporary refuge from these thoughts in hard work. Taking up his pen, listlessly at first—no desire to write prompting him—he soon began to grudge every moment spent elsewhere than at his desk. He toiled as he had never toiled in his life before: feverishly, fiercely, unremittingly, so wearing out his body in the desperate attempt to distract his mind, that, at the close of a single twelve-month, he had aged in appearance by ten years.

Cecily—having once or twice ventured a timid remonstrance, only to learn that all remonstrance was vain—could do no more than mourn the increasing change in him in her childish, helpless fashion. The poor little girl was not, after all, very happy in her romantic marriage. Kindly and even tenderly as Austin always bore himself towards her, she was never wholly at ease in his presence. He was not the Austin whose image had been so long enshrined in her innocent heart, but a magnificent person who resembled him in certain points, and who gave her thoughtful kindness in the place of love. "Why did he ever become a great author?" the poor child

sighed bitterly to herself; and again: "He ought to have had a clever wife—one who could help him, and understand. Perhaps he would have forgotten me, and married some woman like that—if I had not gone to him." The idea bred a doubt: "Perhaps he had forgotten me already." And then came the useless, passionate cry: "Oh, I wish, I wish I had never done it!"

She cried herself to sleep that night. Austin, stumbling upstairs, spent and dizzy with fatigue, in the small hours of the morning, could not but see, blind as he was, the traces of the half-dried tears upon her cheek, and was particularly full of tenderness for her next day. But he never inquired into the cause of her secret sorrow. Perhaps he dared not.

He did his best for her. For her sake, he overcame his shrinking from old friends and new acquaintances alike, and forsook the hermit-existence which he craved above all things. Fancying she wearied of the comparatively quiet life they led in Northern Italy, he offered to take her to Rome for the winter. At this proposal she looked doubtful.

"Wouldn't it be better to go back to London," she suggested diffidently, "where you have so many friends?" Clearly some acquaintance had fired her imagination with an account of his social triumphs.

He could hardly forbear a shudder as he answered: "I am anxious to stay abroad a while longer, dear, for several reasons. I hope you don't dislike Italy?"

"Oh, no!" she replied dutifully. "It is very nice, I think."

"And I am sure you will like Rome," he went on cheerfully. "There is any amount of society to be had there, and you will meet plenty of pleasant people. I think we had better say Rome in December."

To Rome they went, and remained there several months, entering more or less into the winter gaieties of the place. The change did the young wife good. She had little time during the day for brooding over her disappointments, and returned home at night to sleep soundly after her dancing. As for Carew—late hours abroad meaning later vigils at home for him—he grew more haggard and heavy-eyed than ever. In spite of the racking headaches from which he constantly suffered, and the fact that he had just launched a new book with brilliant success, he chose to work as desperately as before, rarely leaving his desk now till dawn. Had he pleased, he might easily have become as much a *persona grata* in Roman palaces as he had once been, for a brief space, in Belgravian drawing-rooms. But his taste for social homage was gone, and the Roman world pronounced him dull and unresponsive—a most unattractive and disappointing lion.

By the end of the carnival season he was thoroughly fagged out. At the German Ambassador's Shrove-Tuesday ball, he found himself halfway through the evening, so faint with fatigue that, knowing

Cecily was dancing, he made his escape to the ante-room, and there sat down to rest. The place was cool and quiet, and for a while he remained its only tenant.

Presently, however, two ladies—Englishwomen, and strangers to him, came in and sat down on a sofa near the outer door. They were talking somewhat eagerly, in clear and rather high voices, and it was impossible for him not to overhear their conversation.

"Yes, she was there," said the elder of the two. "Looking a perfect ghost! Really, she shouldn't wear white now. Her cheeks matched her gown exactly."

"Then she *is* here for her health? I don't think much of the Roman climate for delicate lungs, myself."

"Oh, it's not the lungs that are affected! It's the heart. Yes, very sad—isn't it? I had it from Lady Mary herself."

"They have heart complaint in the family, haven't they?" said the younger lady.

"Not that I'm aware of. Sir George Carmichael asked Lady Mary if there had ever been any great shock to the system. He thought her symptoms pointed that way; and, oddly enough, Dr. Matthews here put the very same question. Unluckily for the diagnosis, Helen never had an accident, or a trouble in her life."

"Rather imprudent of her to go out of an evening, under the circumstances, isn't it?"

"Well, the doctors say she is to be amused; all doctors say that now-a-days, you know, and—why, here they are! Ah, she is wearing black to-night—much more sensible ——"

Three new guests had just entered the ante-room. The foremost two—an elderly lady and a soldierly-looking young man—were people Carew had never consciously seen before; behind them was Helen—a Helen the shadow of her former self, spirit-like in her trailing black robes, blanched to the whiteness of the stephanotis in her bosom.

As she advanced with her companions, the ladies near Carew rose; and, involuntarily, he rose also. His nervous movement displacing his chair, made her turn towards him. For the first time since that moment, two years ago, when she had sunk upon his heart, their eyes met.

He saw her start very slightly, and then stiffen into the rigidity of a lovely statue; her colourless lips, an instant parted, closed again in cold and unyielding lines as of marble. But she did not immediately withdraw her eyes. She deliberately suffered them to rest upon him for a moment; then, still deliberately, turned away, and responded to the greeting of her friends.

The whole party passed on together to the ball-room. Carew stood still in his place. Her brief glance had held so much of intense and burning scorn that he felt as though it had scathed him from head to foot. All the things that he had suffered hitherto were as nothing beside the anguish with which he beheld his condemnation written in the eyes of his last love.

Thenceforward those eyes, calm, unpitying, fixed in their unwavering contempt, haunted him continually. They distracted his throbbing brain in working hours; they robbed him of his brief spells of broken sleep. He withered daily under the vision of them, feeling them burn into his very soul. Besides, had he not seen and heard? Seen the doom that was written in her face? Heard others discuss the problem to which he held the key? She was dying of that very contempt with which she had pierced him through and through.

Since it was Lent, he could guard himself, at least, against all immediate risk of meeting her again. Cecily had now friends enough ready to escort her to the ecclesiastical functions of the season. He shut himself up in the house, and tried to write. But he found no escape, even in his ideal world, from that torturing recollection; and at length work itself became a mockery. He sat, hour after hour, pen in hand, before a sheet of blank paper. Sometimes one blurred and blotted paragraph represented a whole night's toil.

Grown desperate one day, between headache and failure, he took his hat and went out. Surely it was an evil fate that led him to the Borghese Gardens! For he had not been there half-an-hour when, turning into one of the least frequented side-walks, he saw, at only a few paces from him, Helen's slender figure.

She was seated alone on a bench under a magnificent ilex, holding a book in her hand; at the sound of his footsteps she closed the book, and rose hurriedly. "At last!" she began. "I thought you were never coming back. Where ——" There she came to a dead stop; then, hastily recovering herself, moved to pass him by.

He drew back a step, leaving her path free. But this time her strength was not equal to her courage. She trembled, wavered, caught at a projecting branch of the tree, and missed it. Next moment she was lying at his feet.

He raised her in his arms and carried her—not without difficulty, for his physical strength had begun to fail him very markedly of late—to the edge of a fountain a little distance off. There, kneeling on the turf beside her, and supporting her golden head on his left arm, he dipped a handkerchief in the water, and pressed it to her brow and lips. For two or three minutes she lay absolutely without sign of life. Then she stirred, and the terror at his heart gave way a little. "What is it? Where am I?" she asked faintly, opening her eyes.

"You are in the Borghese Gardens." He kept carefully behind her, glad to think that his voice was too hoarse for recognition. "You have had a faint, I think. Pray don't try to move yet."

"Thank you very much," raising herself determinately. "I am much better now. It is quite over—the faintness; I am so sorry to have troubled you. My friends are in the gardens, and there is a carriage waiting for us. If you will kindly give me my hat, I will try to go to it."

He picked up the hat, and helped her silently to her feet. "Oh,

thank you!" she began to say, and the words froze all at once upon her lips. "*You!*" she exclaimed in tones vibrating with indignation. "You have—have *dared!*"

"I could not leave you to die," he answered humbly.

"I would rather have died!"

"Than that I should have touched you? Doubtless!" he returned quietly. "I knew that; still, it was my duty to do what I could. Not as a friend or acquaintance, simply as your fellow-creature. The merest stranger——"

"Ah, if you were a stranger!" She had laid her hand on the pedestal of a statue that stood near, but she scarcely needed the support. Her cheeks were actually flushed. "But you are not —that."

"No, something less. As a stranger, I might dispute your right to deny me the privilege you would not deny the poorest beggar in Rome."

"You think me unjust!" she cried with flashing eyes. "Let me remind you——"

"Pardon me!" he interrupted. "You mistake; I do not think you unjust at all."

She drew a long breath, gazing at him in a kind of astonishment. His ashen face bore witness to the intensity of his past suffering; his lips quivered with the agony of his humiliation; he had just expressly admitted the justice of her condemnation of him. And yet—the strange truth remained—in all this there was nothing of that coward shame which a man, convicted out of his own mouth, of baseness, might have been expected to show in presence of his judge.

It was he who broke the curious silence that had fallen upon them. Her friends—should he look for them? Or would she go to the carriage, as she had said?

She chose the latter alternative. And when, as she began to move feebly in the direction of the gates, he said: "You must permit me to see you safe there." She did not forbid him to follow.

He kept a step or two behind her all the way. Just before they reached their destination, she turned suddenly, and faced him.

"I am doing a strange thing, I know," she said hurriedly. "But —I have a fancy that I shall not live long—and I don't wish to judge you hardly. If there was anything—anything that you might have said, that you did not say—tell it me now. I am ready to hear it. But I am mad!" she broke off passionately. "What on earth could there be?"

"Nothing," he answered hopelessly. "If I could tell you the whole story, it would not soften your scorn of me one whit. Being what you are, you must judge me as you do—for the present."

There was an instant's silence, so profound that they might almost have heard the beating of each other's hearts. The spring breeze sighed softly through the trees overhead; a bird whistled

cheerily to his mate; from far-off came the sharp cry of a cicala. He drew a step nearer.

"The letter killeth, you know," he said, looking at her with a strange gleam in his sunken eyes. "And it is in the letter that I am guilty—the letter that killeth." He muttered the four words under his breath once or twice, still gazing fixedly at her. "The spirit-one comes to that by-and-bye, when the killing is over. Elsewhere—I fancy sometimes—elsewhere—you will understand——"

But at this she made a little silencing gesture with her hand, and walked on.

Her friends were waiting for her at the gates. There had been some mistake about the *rendezvous*, Carew heard one of them say. As soon as he saw her safe in their hands, he drew back, not waiting for thanks. Nor, indeed, did Helen proffer any.

As she sank back in the carriage, however, her heart smote her—her woman's heart. His face, oh! his face! And then that strange reserving of his defence for another world. No, she could not leave him without some sign of adieu. She leaned forward.

But it was too late. Someone else leaned forward too, anxious with kind officiousness to shield her from the sun, and veiled her tardy movement. The carriage drove away. He remained motionless where she had left him, feeling every beat of her horses' hoofs upon the hard white road strike heavily into his brain.

Three weeks elapsed before Helen was again able to drive out. It was on a lovely afternoon in May that she left the house for the first time, accompanied by Lady Mary. Her cousin, Captain Markham, who was "doing" the lions of Rome with characteristic vigour, occupied the third seat in the open carriage, and kept up an incessant flow of talk with Helen's aunt.

Helen herself remained silent, paying little or no heed to her companions' conversation. Her whole attention was given to the streets through which she was passing, and the persons lounging, or jostling each other, on the pavements. The crowds of these were very great, for, on this ideal May day, all Rome appeared to be abroad.

They had reached the outskirts of the city, when Lady Mary was startled by a sudden movement at her side, a quick tremulous whisper. "It is all right now. He saw me." Turning rapidly, she saw Helen, who had leaned forward as if to greet a passing acquaintance, sink back again upon her cushions.

"Who was that, dear?" inquired the elder woman. "I thought you bowed to some one," she added, for Helen's face showed that she was unconscious of having spoken aloud.

"It was Mr. Carew," in the same shaken whisper.

"Mr. Carew!" Lady Mary repeated, looking over her shoulder with a puzzled air. The carriage was passing through a narrow lane, flanked on either side by high walls, in which, as far as the old lady

could see, there was not a human being visible, except a solitary small boy asleep under an archway. "I didn't see him. Are you certain, Helen?"

"Quite certain—" dreamily. "And I know he saw me. I am thankful for that." Then, seeming to wake suddenly from her preoccupation—"Oh, yes, I am quite certain," she said, speaking this time in her natural voice, and flushing slightly.

"I suppose it was the sun that prevented my seeing him. It was full in my eyes," said Lady Mary.

"But it wasn't in mine," Captain Markham objected. "And, excuse me, Helen, I really think you must have had an hallucination of the senses. There wasn't a soul——" he checked himself at a peremptory sign from Lady Mary, asking adroitly, "Do *you* know Carew, Aunt Mary?"

"No. Neither does Helen, really. Only we found out the other day that he was the person who assisted her so kindly when she fainted in the Borghese Gardens. I wanted your uncle to call and thank him—but Helen thought that unnecessary. Have you met him, Bertie?"

"I've seen him in town, that's all. He used to be a great favourite in society."

"So we are told. People here don't like him particularly; they say he is unsociable, and gives himself exclusive airs. There is a pretty little wife who seems to go everywhere, however."

Captain Markham nodded. "I was introduced to her some weeks back, at a picnic. Pretty enough; but not the sort of woman one would have thought likely to fascinate a man of Carew's stamp."

"No?" said Lady Mary, and dropped the subject.

When the drive was over, and Markham, having deposited his charges at their own door, was about to turn away, she managed to detain him. "I must really beg your pardon for shutting you up so brusquely this afternoon, my dear boy," she said, as soon as Helen had passed into the house. "But the doctors say it is not well to contradict her just now, or excite her in any way. And, you know, it really doesn't matter much if she *did* bow to someone else by mistake for Mr. Carew."

"Not in the least," Markham agreed with a smile. "Especially," he added to himself, as he strode down the sunny street, "as there was no one else there to bow to. What the deuce could have made her think she saw him?"

Finding plenty to entertain him in the Roman streets, Captain Markham did not return to his aunt's house till close upon dinner-time. Entering the drawing-room rather hastily before going upstairs, he came, not only upon Lady Mary herself, and Helen—who sat in a low chair, wearing a more tranquil expression than he had seen on her pale face these two years past—but also upon Dr. Matthews, who had evidently just concluded his daily visit.

"Certainly there is improvement—marked improvement," he was saying in a complacent tone, as Markham opened the door. "Ah, Captain Markham, how do you do? You look as if you had some news to give us."

"Only news that will be none to you, I suspect," replied Markham, who certainly did look slightly excited. "Of course you have heard about poor Carew? I suppose he was a patient of yours?"

"No, my friend Dr. Farebrother attended him. He told me it was a serious case—inflammation of the brain, constitution broken down by systematic over-work—but he quite hoped to pull the poor fellow through. You don't mean to say——?"

"Yes. Died this afternoon, without recovering consciousness. They say the poor little wife is in a terrible state. She was not at all prepared for this."

"Poor young creature!" ejaculated Lady Mary, whose kind eyes were full of tears. "And what a sadly premature ending of all that brilliancy! With such a future before him—everything to make him happy—when did you say it happened, Bertie?"

"Early this afternoon. So you see, Helen," turning to his cousin, "it certainly was *not* Carew whom you saw in the Via. Good heavens, what is the matter with her?"

Lady Mary rushed forward with an exclamation of dismay. But the old physician interposed. "Gently, if you please; stand back, both of you; let *me* go to her," he said.

They stood back, awed by his manner, while he loosened the collar of his patient's dress, and, stooping, laid his ear for a moment against her heart. Lady Mary clutched Markham's arm tightly.

"I believe they are not dangerous—these faints," she whispered tremulously. "But they always frighten me; and to-day she looks worse than usual. However, don't be nervous; she will come round in a minute or two—they never last long. Dr. Matthews knows—Dr. Matthews!" breaking suddenly into appeal, as the old man drew himself slowly upright again. "Tell him what it is—only a faint."

But Dr. Matthews was silent, looking into his companions' blanched and terrified faces with grave, compassionate eyes.

A STUDIO FLAT.

I.

"HUNDRED and six—hundred and seven—hundred and eight! The top at last, thank goodness! If ever I come here, I shan't go downstairs more than once a-week!"

The flats known as Raphael Gardens have no lifts; hence they let at moderate rents to artists and people whose legs are generally longer than their purses.

Heaven forbid that such a sweeping rule should be applied to Miss Amiel Carew! In respect of her purse, she was pretty well-to-do, and lived from choice, not necessity, in an artists' quarter, trying to fancy herself more of an artist than, perhaps, she really was. As to her length of limb, she was five feet seven in height and very well-proportioned; but the stairs at Raphael Gardens tried even her zealous and hopeful climbing.

She knocked at the door of the Studio Flat; it opened from inside without any visible agency.

"I suppose I go in," Miss Carew said aloud, doubtfully. It was her habit to dare anything mentally, but to make little verbal appeals of this sort to support her character as a young lady. She shut the outer door and entered a dim passage, obscured with looped curtains; beyond was a wide open space, full of dusty afternoon sun.

"I have an order to view this flat from Messrs. Wheeler and Wallby," she went on, sending her voice, sweet and rather shrill, before her: it is so awkward if people don't know you are coming in. "I hope this is a convenient time to —— Good heavens! are you ill?"

A young man was leaning against the mantelpiece; he had risen to touch the knob by which the front door was opened, and his thin white hand still strayed shakily along the wall, while his head had slipped forward upon the mantel-board. He was faint, and but for his other hand's clutch at the high wooden shelf, would probably have fallen.

Amiel Carew not only knew what to do, but managed to do it in a few seconds. She pushed the big armchair close to him, pushed him gently into it, with his head tilted back, opened a window just behind him, and rubbed eau de Cologne from a small bottle she happened by good fortune to have in her pocket behind his ears. He began to sigh deeply, and opened the blackest eyes in the world, which looked as if they were set in saucers of the painter's own Indian ink.

"I beg your pardon: I don't know what ——" he began.

"I beg *your* pardon, but please hold your tongue for a little," she

interrupted. "Hold this and smell it," putting the flask of eau de Cologne into his hand, "while I get something to cover you. You are shaking with cold, but we must have a little air."

And in a minute she had an old Inverness and an Algerian blanket tucked well round him.

He shut his eyes and opened them again, this time a trifle less wearily. "May I speak now?"

"You had better not; there is no need. I am Miss Carew, and I brought an order from the agents to see your flat. I want one for myself, and I think I should like Raphael Gardens. You managed to open the door for me, but then this faintness came on. If you will allow me, I will just look round the studio; and by the time I have made up my mind you will be all right again."

This was not giving him much time to recover; for, as a rule, Miss Carew made up her mind instantaneously about everything. She had decided when she opened the window that this flat, in spite of the hundred and eight steps that led to it, was just what she wanted.

Now, however, she went a little more closely into detail; the view into the spring green of the park opposite was exquisite—it is a people's park, but it buds and blossoms all the same—that corner would hold her big oak settle—that pearl-coloured strip of river barred by an ink-black bridge was a possession for life—yes! the Studio Flat would do—at least as far as the studio. She came back to the black-eyed man in the chair; he struggled free of the coat and the blanket and tried to get up.

"Don't, please! or I shall feel that I have come at a very inopportune time to disturb you."

"Indeed, no! I don't know what would have happened if you had not come in and helped me! That is the worst of flat life—one is terribly alone."

"Have you no servant?" She was sorry directly she had asked the question, for the artist blushed, though it was something to have the assurance that he still had any blood in his body.

"No; the fact is, things have not been going very prosperously with me lately, and I had to give up the housekeeper with whom I started. Altogether the place is too large for me."

"May I look at the kitchen and bedrooms for a moment?" She was gone across the passage in a flash, leaving the painter to get up, stretch himself wearily and put away the encumbering wraps—he was horribly ashamed of the momentary weakness that she had witnessed, and in his humiliation almost forgot the outward and visible signs of his poverty which Miss Carew must have also discovered.

On the kitchen table stood a spirit lamp and an open pot of Bovril; there were some stony-looking crusts of bread in a cupboard; a piece of cheese, so very much reduced that the tumbler which was turned over it was too large for the occasion; an empty tin which

smelt of coffee, that was all. Miss Carew had some water boiling over the lamp while she made her researches; she was too much in earnest to hesitate on the score of delicacy; she scraped out the Bovril, salted and tasted it as she paused and stirred the steaming liquid, ran back to the cupboard and dug out, rather than cut, the least dry portion of crumb, and in five minutes carried the little meal into the studio.

"I have brought you your soup," she said quietly; "if you had had it before you would not have had that attack; please drink it now, at once, and then we can talk business."

The young man flushed again, but he did as he was bid. "It is wonderfully good stuff, this Bovril," he said, as he put down the cup empty; "it is so easy to make in a hurry when—when one doesn't want the trouble of going out to lunch. But you make it much better than I do."

"You ought to have real beef-tea two or three times a day," said Amiel, as if she were thinking aloud; "now will you tell me all about the flat, Mr.—Mr.——" She stopped, and looked about for the agent's order.

"My name is Austyn."

"I think it would just do for me, Mr. Austyn, if you could let me have it at once."

"To-morrow, if you like, there is nothing to detain me," answered Dick Austyn.

In the evening of the same day Austyn was dragging his possessions about the studio under the impression that he was packing, when the knocker sounded again, and this time a young man about his own age stood in the entry and looked enquiringly through the looped curtains. "Mr. Austyn," he said in a voice which somehow the painter thought he had heard before, "I hope I am not intruding? My cousin, Miss Carew, who was here this morning sent me to look for her bangle, which she says she must have left on your kitchen-table—may I? My good fellow, don't attempt to move that chest by yourself."

Miss Carew had deliberately put her bracelet on the kitchen dresser, and had ordered her slave and cousin, Dr. Carew, to call for it and give a look at the black-eyed painter.

"A case of clear starvation," said the doctor, reporting later, "that is, starvation and disappointment, which is the same thing if you substitute the mind for the stomach. I've a great idea of carrying him down to Seaford for a week or two when you take over the flat."

"How has he run down so? Can't he paint?" asked Amiel.

"Heaven knows; you ought to be a better judge of that than I; but what you all want nowadays with daubing and dabbling with paints and turpentine when there's real work crying out to be done, passes me."

Dr. Carew fancied himself a utilitarian and a good business-man-friend for his cousin; in reality, he was romantic and over his ears in love with her.

II.

It was spring again—the buds in the squares were bursting, the People's Park had a green, misty sheen stealing over it morning by morning; the studios were full of daffodils and of smart visitors, who tiptoed about in front of the pictures, using inappropriate adjectives in wrong places.

Amiel Carew had half-a-dozen pictures on view in the studio flat, and excellent tea and cakes from Buszard. Her exhibition was very popular; people came again and again to look at her "Goldfinches in a Pear-tree," her "Ducklings and Green Peas," her "Kentish Cobs."

"What I always feel about Miss Carew's pictures is that one can buy them if one likes, they are within one's reach in every sense, and yet she is sufficiently well off not to care a jot whether one does or not. Whereas with some artists, directly one has swallowed a morsel of their bread and butter, poor souls, one feels bound to give them an order, and unless they do pastel heads of oneself or the children, it *is* difficult—and one *must* have tea somewhere these exhausting afternoons."

Mrs. Cheyne-Walker is an art critic of some repute in her own set, and to do her justice, she is very liberal and encouraging towards young artists.

"You are looking very tired and done-up," said Dr. Carew to his cousin one afternoon when everybody else had gone. He frankly announced that he had come to look at her and not at her pictures, and he had done so, attentively and long; the result was this remark.

"I am a little tired; I have been working hard to get all these finished in time; presently, when I know their fate, I will go down to the sea and have a blow before the season really begins."

"Humph! go down to Seaford" (Dr. Carew had a kind of hobby-Home at Seaford, at which he cured people in a most unprofessional manner by means of sea-air and bathing, and country food and early hours), "there are hardly any patients there now; we have been building, and you can have the whole place to yourself, if you like. I'll come down and tell you what to eat and drink, and bring you all the most trashy novels. I've an idea that this flat of yours doesn't suit you."

"Oh, indeed it does."

"I'm not so sure. Why do you look like a ghost—you didn't a year ago? And why did that fellow Austyn break down here? Look at him now—he's as hearty as any man need be, working away."

Miss Carew was dissatisfied with her daffodils, and had pulled them all out on the table before her. Daffodils are delicious things;

you can put your face down into a bunch of them and imagine all sorts of untold secrets about the Spring.

"Mr. Austyn is working hard, you said?"

"He has a very fine picture if I'm any judge. And he's another man since he got out of this place, and picked up his strength again at Seaford."

"Since he found a friend in you, and picked up his courage again, and his desire to live," said Amiel, putting her hand for an instant on her cousin's, and looking at him with soft, shining eyes; "how dare you pretend to me, when you know quite well what it was that broke him down, and what set him up again?"

"Oh, well, it was you discovered him and his untoward plight." Dr. Carew was an eminently practical, common-place man, but when his cousin Amiel looked at him and touched his hand in that impulsive way, he was disconcerted and lost the thread of his speech. "Lucky for him you found him here, or he would probably have starved himself to death under the impression that he was behaving very magnificently—and Seaforth air did the rest. You had better come and try it, Amiel; let me send down word to Mrs. North to get a couple of rooms ready for you, and leave this atmosphere of turpentine as soon as possible. When will you go?"

"Thank you, David. I will think of it, and ——"

"And not go?"

"And go, as soon as ever my pictures are hung. If you talk like that, I shall think you are only asking me out of politeness, and don't expect me to accept. And if you see Mr. Austyn, you might say to him that my pictures will be here a couple of days longer, and I should like to show them to him if he can spare the time to come—without interrupting his own work, David."

Two days after, Austyn came. He and Amiel Carew had met frequently since their first encounter in the studio flat; he had learnt to laugh about his fainting fit, for he was strong and well and on the fair road to be prosperous again. It was Amiel, the practical and self-reliant, who was a little bit confused when he alluded, laughing, to the Bovril and the Algerian blanket.

Nearly all women—certainly all nice ones—are instinctively maternal and protective: they want to help and "do for" anyone in distress or discomfort, and they do not wait to think of difference of age or sex or position. Later, perhaps, scruples of expediency assert themselves. Even now, after a year's ordinary friendly intercourse, Miss Carew could not look at the dark face and slender figure of Dick Austyn without remembering how unceremoniously she had seized and thrust him into a chair; how she had turned his head to the air, and dashed eau de Cologne down his neck; how she had unfastened the stud of his collar and imperiously pushed him back, and tucked the rugs about him when he tried to rise. Dick might forget, had forgotten everything except an impression of kindliness and womanly

interest, but her fingers tingled, and even sometimes her cheeks grew hot as some chance word or movement recalled the scene. The young man was strolling from one of her pictures to another this afternoon, talking as he went, and Amiel, more fulfilled than ever before with this strange, new self-consciousness, sat in the window arm-chair and watched him.

"This is very good," halting at the "Ducklings and Green Peas," which Amiel had studied in a Kentish farmyard the year before—a clutch of yellow, straddling young ducks, unmindful of the future, pulling at a blossoming row of peas. "Every bird has a character ——"

"Yes, a duck's character," contemptuously.

"Well, what would you have? You don't want them to look like eagles?"

Amiel laughed, but her "I suppose not," was only half-hearted. She turned round for a minute or two; somehow, while she looked at Mr. Austyn, striding from picture to picture in the studio that had been his own, she could not concentrate her thoughts or words properly. "What is your subject?" she asked.

"Only a bit of coast, beyond Seaford."

"My cousin says it is first-rate. I should like to see it before I go down to Seaford and find out the original."

"I'm afraid I can't go in for a private view this year. I've been working in a little out-of-the-way hole since I came up from the country, and till I know where I am with this picture, I cannot re-establish myself within the pale of respectability even. But if it is hung, as it will be ——"

"You are quite confident? That is a delightful thing to feel."

"Yes; somehow I know this is a successful thing. It may be the reaction from my cropper last year, or it may be that Dr. Carew has tonicked me up to a high state of self-complacency, but I feel certain that this picture will get a place, and a good place, and a price, and a good price."

"And the man who painted it will get a name, and a good name," Amiel finished, kindly.

"If he ever does," the young man answered, coming to a full stop in front of her chair, "it will be thanks to you and your cousin."

"Nonsense!" she said, without looking at him. "How do you call your picture?"

"'Where the quiet-coloured end of evening smiles miles on miles,'" he quoted.

"Have any of the reviewers seen it? Won't you bring it up here, and let it have a chance of being known for a few days before sending it in? I am going away myself, so you could have anyone you pleased at the studio without inconveniencing me, and you could get critics to come here, perhaps, who would not go outside the pale of respectability, as you call it."

"Are you going away before sending in your pictures, and varnishing

day and all? Why, Miss Carew, are you ill? We have been so busy talking that I forgot to ask you how you were—you have been overworking, no doubt."

"Possibly: David says, women have no sense of proportion. I have worked till I am tired—a little tired of everything; and I am going down to Seaford to stop till the appetite for something comes back. Do bring your picture up here to be seen, and when you send it in, let my "Ducklings" go with it. Is it a bargain?"

III.

Miss Carew went down to Seaford the next day, and wandered over the cliffs in the spring twilight, fancying that here or there Dick Austyn must have his point of view for the "End of Evening." Likewise she routed out an odd volume of Browning from among David Carew's college books, and read and re-read the poem from which Austyn had chosen his title. Amiel could almost repeat "Love among the Ruins," by heart, and yet she always went back to it with fresh zest, picturing to herself that thus Dick Austyn had read it also, letting the exquisite words sink into his soul to be reproduced in those silver touches of after-sunset light which the Art Reviews in all the papers were lauding so highly.

For the "End of Evening" was, as Dick had predicted, a great success; it had been seen at the studio in Raphael Gardens just in time. The art critic of the *Panorama* had recovered from the attack of the gout, which had tinged his earlier critiques, and gave it a hearty reception. The committee had, either for its merit, or for the convenient size of its frame, hung it on the line. Every newspaper that David Carew posted down to his cousin had a notice of it: the illustrated weeklies reproduced it in black and white. Amiel, who was rather languid and depressed in the suddenly warm April weather, which had come with a burst of sunshine since her arrival at Seaford, used to toss aside the magazines and periodicals with which her cousin kept her liberally supplied, and skim through the daily papers for mention of Austyn's work: she even forgot her own "Ducklings" and "Kentish Cobs," both of which had been accepted, in her interest in the "End of Evening."

Mrs. North, Dr. Carew's matron and factotum at Seaford, was very much concerned about Miss Carew, who had been most specially commended to her care by her master. "I don't hold with so much reading myself," she used to say, "howsomedever" (this conjunction was Mrs. North's particular favourite) "to see a party quite wrapped up in a book may have its advantages. I won't say it hasn't, but all this fluttering and flittering through the newspapers can't be healthy, and that I've told Miss Amiel, time over time."

Dr. Carew being a modest and very tactful man, kept out of his cousin's way during the first week of her stay in his sanitarium, and

contented himself with sending her every kind of necessary and unnecessary extra by every available means of transmission. On the second Saturday after her coming she began to wonder whether she should ever see anyone from London again, and it was scarcely a surprise when, turning out of the garden-gate into the high road for her afternoon walk on the cliffs, she came face to face with Mr. Austyn, who was racing up from the railway station at a rate strangely at variance with his usual lazy demeanour.

"It's sold, Miss Carew; sold for a hundred and twenty guineas! I heard this very morning, and I rushed off to tell you at once. You know I haven't a soul in the world belonging to me who cares, but I thought you would, and indeed I owe it all—— By Jove, you *are* looking ill! what have you been doing? Doesn't this place suit you?"

An onlooker might have well been struck by the contrast between the faces of the two artists. Dick Austyn's was alight with triumph and ambition; his black eyes were dancing with excitement; he might have stood for an embodiment of Hope. Amiel Carew, a year his junior, was pale and worn-looking, as if with long, anxious watching: the lassitude which her doctor-cousin had remarked ten days before had grown into languor, the colour which sprang suddenly to her cheek when Austyn spoke looked suspiciously like fever; the young man, even in his flush of egotistical satisfaction, was startled and shocked at the change in his friend.

"Have you been suffering? Hasn't Carew prescribed for you?" he went on, in a burst of contrition for his previous self-absorption. "Do you know you look as if you had had an illness since I saw you the week before last. Ought you to be here by yourself, with no one to look after you?" He was genuinely concerned, and held her hand as he poured out his string of questions.

It was almost more than Amiel could bear, though the real nature of what ailed her only revealed itself in that bitter-sweet moment when she stood face to face with Dick Austyn, and knew that his friendly anxiety on her behalf would never cost him a sleepless hour or an additional heart-beat. She pulled her hand away from his almost impatiently, with a quick—

"Oh, I am all right; it is only the sudden warmth that has tried me a little. Tell me about the 'End of Evening,' and who has bought it, and if you have any other orders?"

So the young man talked of his future plans and aspirations: of the introductions that had followed on his recent success, of the pros and cons respecting the advisability of resuming work at once in London, or of taking a run abroad first to some of the Continental galleries. There was nothing that was not possible to the young man with that cheque for a hundred and twenty guineas at his back. Amiel said very little in reply, but he was sure of her interest and her silence did not trouble him.

They were standing on the edge of the cliff, looking westward, when she took a mighty resolve that had been forming in her mind all the while that they walked together; it was one of those audacious, pathetic throws for happiness that some naturally reserved women will make at times of deep mental struggle, which rend the heart from which they came—and result, alas! ninety-nine times out of a hundred, in bitter, remorseful self-scorn. But because the hundredth time the light of a new joy is born of the effort, women will go on making it till the world's end.

"You know," Miss Carew said, in a quiet, rather careful voice, different, if Austyn had had ears to hear, from her usual clear tones, "I have never seen your picture. I have come out here, evening after evening, and fancied that this was the place from which you painted it. I have read those verses of Browning's here, on this very spot, and I think I must have understood something of what you have put into your painting. Of course there has been no gorgeous city here, no chariot racing, no temples and colonnades, but still these Eastern Downs were once peopled with a busy, stirring population, whose boroughs and churches and townships have passed away and left no trace, save a few lines of grey stones where the sheep shelter on windy nights. And so I fancy you have put the old life that is gone, into your 'End of Evening,' and yet have managed to suggest what remains to us this day, what the poet has summed up in that last verse—

> "Oh, heart! oh, blood that freezes, blood that burns!
> Earth's returns
> For all centuries of folly, noise and sin!
> Shut them in,
> With their triumphs, and their glories, and the rest—
> Love is best!"

"Why, what are you talking about, Miss Carew?" Austyn asked in astonishment. "Is all that in Browning's poem? I am afraid you will be awfully disappointed in my picture if you expect it to mean so much; it is a simple landscape enough without much suggestiveness, and as for the little lines, I must have picked them up somewhere; in a heading to a chapter, I fancy; for I've certainly never read a word of the rest of it."

"It is getting cold," Amiel said with a shiver. "It is time we were turning back."

When Austyn heard from Dr. Carew some weeks later that his cousin had been lying between life and death with brain fever in the Seaford Home, the artist was not very much surprised, though sincerely concerned. "You know, Doctor, she talked extremely strangely that last day that I saw her; and I thought her looking awfully ill, as if she were in for something serious. I nearly came to tell you about it when I got back to town, but on second thoughts I decided that it was no business of mine."

If Dr. Carew thought of a similar case, in which Amiel had not waited to inquire whether it was or was not her business to help a stranger, he did not say anything. Mrs. North had summoned him in time, as it happened; and his patient was creeping back to life now, very slowly, but, thank God, surely. His next remark had reference to Austyn's own affairs.

"Yes, I am going to Munich," the artist answered. "The best of the season is over here, and I have reaped more than my share of the harvest. I shall take a month among the galleries and some weeks in the Tyrol, and come back and work hard before the winter."

Eight months later, in the early spring of the new year, the two men ran across each other in Rome, on the steps of the Piazza di Spagna. Austyn had prolonged his stay abroad, and Carew had arrived in the Holy City on a visit only the night before. There was plenty to say on both sides; but, as was his wont, the artist was the most communicative. He was successful, and quite pleased with himself. A princess had taken him up, and the Americans were buying his pictures as fast as he could paint them. He had a big thing on hand that was destined for the Royal Academy.

"How is your cousin? Do you think there would be any chance of her letting me have the Raphael Gardens studio again? I have such a fancy to go back there, and have all London climbing up after my pictures. If there were any chance of Miss Carew caring to let—— By-the-bye, has she sufficiently recovered to be able to work?"

"Thank you," said Dr. Carew, smiling. "She is quite well, though she hasn't been working lately. She is not occupying the Studio Flat at present; and I dare say you could have it again."

"I wish you would sound her about it when you write," Austyn interrupted eagerly: he was so full of his own plans and projects that he could scarcely let the Doctor finish.

"I will ask her, as she is here in Rome."

"In Rome? You don't say so! Is she here to paint, or merely for change of air, or ——"

"We are on our honeymoon," said David Carew, interrupting in his turn.

Oddly enough, although "The End of Evening" was exhibited for some months, even after the close of the Academy, in a Bond Street gallery, Amiel Carew seemed to have lost all interest in it, and never attempted to go and see it. For she discovered in time that though Dick Austyn had once for a short season caught her fancy, her heart had never belonged to any one but Dr. Carew.

G. B. Stuart.

ON THE HEIM-WEH FLUH.

[In the immediate neighbourhood of Interlaken there is a hill which has a peculiar interest to travellers. It is called the "Heim-Weh Fluh," or *Home-Sickness Hill*, and has derived its name from the fact that it is generally the last spot in that part of Switzerland visited by tourists, and when their thoughts are naturally turned towards home. Although not by any means of great altitude, the view from it is superb, including the Grindelwald, Lauterbrünnen Valley and the grand snow-crowned peaks of the *Monk* and the *Jungfrau* in the far distance.]

SWEET from the bells of Interlaken, stealing
Upon the soft wings of the summer air,
The music of the *Angelus* came pealing
Like praise before the hush of silent prayer.
The evening sunlit fell in burnished glory,
And lit the Alpine ridges, zone by zone,
Like scenes in John's Apocalyptic story
Of jasper walls and awful snow-white Throne.

By glacier, peak and rill we had been roaming,
But now the charm of all was nearly past,
And, home-sick, in this sweet Swiss summer gloaming,
We stood upon the Heim-Weh Fluh at last.
And as the sunlit snowy peaks were glistening
High o'er the shadows of the dying day,
So we, through fancy's kindly charm, were listening
To voices by our fireside far away.

Some of us had our homes by English meadows,
And some by orange-groves in lands afar,
And some within the sacred, solemn shadows
That haunt the solitudes of Loch-na-gar.
And, as the *Angelus* came softly stealing,
With that sweet sound that all the spirit fills,
Who could reproach us for the tender feeling
Which made us home-sick for our native hills?

But there was one amongst us who was yearning
For her dear Home, not now to her afar;
As life ebb'd low her faith kept stronger burning,
As out from darkness brighter glows the star.
There was a glory in that Home, transcending
The brightest sun that on the Jungfrau shines;
And in her eyes heaven's palms were ever blending
With the green sprays of Interlaken's pines.

We left her there, as one in patience drifting,
With shining face, adown a placid stream;
For God before her eyes the haze was lifting,
And reading for her life's strange mystic dream.
Safe on her way, she needed not our pity—
Say, rather our God-speed—for she was blest:
Before her eyes gleamed God's fair golden City,
And she was nearer it than all the rest.

ALEXANDER LAMONT.

"YOU WILL LET ME CALL YOU CHARLOTTE?" SAID TRIX, IN HER PRETTY, INSINUATING WAY.

THE ARGOSY.

JUNE, 1892.

A GUILTY SILENCE.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ESTHER AND SILAS.

ALTHOUGH we may seem to have lost sight of Esther Sarel and Silas Ringe for a long time, that pair of lovers are by no means forgotten. They have not, indeed, required any looking after on our part, being quite content to float pleasantly along on the sweet stream of courtship, unruffled as yet by storms or adverse weather, towards a future bright with promise.

Through the balmy spring and the hot months of summer their humble loves progressed quietly and uneventfully. Both of them had been hard workers all their lives, both of them had got to win their daily bread by the labour of their hands, and neither of them had either time or inclination to indulge in any of those sentimental fancies or lackadaisical outbursts to which lovesick people not uncommonly fall an easy prey. Their love was like themselves, plain, homespun, and straightforward; not at all given to raptures, and unacquainted with the use of fine language. It did not spoil their appetites or their sleep, or render them less cheerful, or worse company when amongst others, than they had been before they took to walking out together. And yet, with all this, they loved far more truly and sincerely than many a sentimental miss and finely-dressed, shallow-pated young gentleman, to whom the grand passion is all flame and crackling, all delirium and despair—while it lasts: a very pretty veneer, I grant you; but, then, how soon it stands in need of repair!

Esther went about her daily work, singing the hymns she had learnt when a child, thinking of what Silas had said at their last meeting, and looking forward to the hour when she should see him again. Silas went about *his* daily work, whistling softly to himself, and thinking about his pretty Esther, and what a dainty little wife she would make him, and of the happy home he intended to build up

for her. Thinking, too, of the cherished work he had in hand, the commission Lord Borrowash had given him, which was now drawing on towards completion ; thinking of this, it may be, quite as often as he thought of Esther. But this, the cherished work of his brain, and she who was so dear to his heart were so mixed up and wrought one within the other in his thoughts that, even had he been so minded, he would have found it difficult to disintegrate the two, and think of either of them apart from the other.

Yes, the great work was drawing near completion. An attack of low fever, which had incapacitated Silas for any kind of work, had delayed it for several weeks; but now Silas was up and about again, working with renewed energy; and three more months at the furthest, should nothing unforeseen occur to mar his hopes, would see his task thoroughly achieved. More and more he devoted himself to it now that the end was drawing so close, almost begrudging the few hours he gave to Esther on week-day evenings. Day by day some fresh minute touch was added: here the veining of a leaf was brought out more clearly; there a ruffled feather showed itself, as though it had been left thus by accident, and not by cunning design ; now it was an acorn dropped carelessly among the tangled weedage at the base, or the broken frond of a fern. Silas in every instance studied direct from nature. Whether it was a dead woodcock or a sprig of ivy, there the real thing hung before him till he had mastered it in minutest detail, and made it his own for ever. Several times he woke suddenly in the night with the thought of some little alteration or addition, hitherto overlooked, impressed so vividly on his mind that he could not rest till he had got up and shuffled into his clothes, and taken a light and gone and made it there and then.

While possessed by a true, workmanlike desire to see his task brought to a happy ending, there were yet times when he dreaded the coming of the day when his hands should find nothing further to do on it—when it should pass away bodily from his sight into the possession of another, who might, indeed, admire it with the cold admiration of a connoisseur, but who could never look on it with one tithe of the love with which he himself regarded it. How empty and desolate his life would seem when it should be gone! Not Esther herself would be quite able to console him for the loss of this well-loved child of his brain.

"I know that I shall feel a pang of heartache," said Silas one day, while talking with Esther on this subject, "when my Lord Borrowash shall send to claim his property."

"No doubt you will, Silas; but then, there's the money to be thought of," urged practical Esther in reply. "I suppose that painters, and sculptors, and humble carvers in wood are like other people in one respect: they all want to sell their works, and would be very much disappointed if nobody would buy them; indeed, in that case,

how would they contrive to live? I should think they must be very glad to get as good a price as possible for their works, and go on inventing more."

"Yes, yes, we know all about that," answered Silas. "Of course, they must sell their works—such being the only test of success in these commercial days. And, as you say, they must live. Praxiteles himself could not exist without a proper supply of bread and cheese, or whatever the fellows of those days had to eat. But you always do bring things down to a low level, Esther."

"It may be so, Silas; but it seems to me that work of any kind is always done best when people have to earn their living by it; it's a sort of obligation, generally speaking, that compels them to do their best."

"We are getting altogether out of the track of what I was saying," returned Silas. "I see the point is one you don't understand, so we had better say no more about it."

"But I do understand it, Silas," persisted Esther. "I quite understand that you won't part with this pretty sideboard without a feeling of regret. But you will have the consolation of being paid for it, and of finding yourself at liberty to begin something else."

"Ah, well, I know of old that it's no use arguing such questions with you. We always come down to the pie-and-pudding level in the end."

"And a very good level too!" said Esther, with a laugh; and then she pouted her pretty lips for a kiss—an appeal which Silas could never resist.

Twice a month Esther had a half-holiday and on these occasions she always came and drank tea with Mrs. Ringe, bringing with her some little delicacy which she knew would be a treat to the poor bedridden old woman. After tea, she would take her sewing or embroidery, and go and sit in the little outhouse at the bottom of the garden, while happy Silas went on with his work. Then, too, on Sunday evenings, Silas always met Esther as she came out of church, and together they would take an hour's ramble through the fields, till the sound of the Abbey clock striking nine warned Esther that the moment for parting had come.

"Are you sure, Esther, that you don't love me any less because I am lame and ugly?" the self-tormenting Silas would sometimes anxiously ask.

"You are not ugly, Silas; far from it," Esther would make answer "And as for your lameness, it was just that which first drew me towards you. If you had not been lame, I don't think I should ever have got to like you."

"Ah, what a grand thing it must be to be tall, and straight, and handsome, and perfect in every limb!" sighed querulous Silas.

"Yes, and stupid and self-conceited into the bargain, as your very handsome men often are," responded Esther. "Now, I have a

cousin in the Life Guards, one of the handsomest fellows that ever stepped in shoe-leather; but, law! Silas, you have more brains in your little finger than he has in all his big body. So be content, do, you old grumbler. Is it not better to be clever than handsome?"

"I am not so certain about that," answered Silas. "But as for me, I'm a poor devil who is neither one nor the other."

"Don't use bad language, sir, or I shall leave you," said Esther. "It seems to me that you are fishing for a compliment, but you won't get one. But I don't mind giving you just the wee-est, tiniest kiss, right in the middle of your forehead; and then I'll hum over one of your favourite songs, while you finish the webbed foot of that water-fowl."

So equable and good-tempered was Esther Sarel, such bright, hopeful, commonsense views did she take of everything, that it was no wonder the morbid, self-questioning mind of Silas Ringe found in her that repose and freedom from fanciful disquietude which he lacked so greatly himself; and he clung to her accordingly. He knew that he loved her very fondly, but he did not know how firmly the fibres of his heart had twined themselves around the image of this girl, till events soon to come to pass put him to the bitter proof.

"I had a good look at your Miss Davenant and her sister this afternoon, as they were going down Oxlip Hill on their way to church," said Silas one Sunday evening, as he and Esther were walking through the fields. "I have seen Miss Davenant several times before, but never so close at hand as to-day; and the younger one was quite a stranger to me."

"Well, sir, and was your fastidious taste pleased for once?"

"Yes; it must have been very fastidious indeed if it had not been pleased. The face of the younger sister is very sweet and very lovely, but Miss Davenant's is just grand." Silas paused for a moment, and Esther gave his arm a little squeeze. "Yes, if I were a sculptor," he resumed, "hers is just the kind of head I should like to create out of the snowy marble. That woman has gone through a great deal of trouble, you take my word for it, Esther. There is a sort of sweet solemn melancholy about the eyes, and yet the whole face is full of hungry intellect. A very remarkable head, indeed."

"I am so pleased that you like her," said Esther warmly.

"I did not say that I liked her," answered Silas. "I can admire the shape of a woman's head, or the expression of her face, without admiring her individually. No, I do *not* like Miss Davenant."

Esther stared like one aghast. "And pray what reason have you for disliking her?" she asked a little hotly.

"I have not said that I do dislike her," answered Silas. "Is it not possible neither to like nor dislike a person, but to be utterly indifferent as their existence? And this is about the state of my feelings as regards Miss Davenant. But stay, let me be candid; if

one side of the scale slightly, very slightly, overweighs the other, it is that I dislike her more than I like her."

"Silas!"

"Esther! Being a woman, you of course want my reasons for such a statement. Well, I have just none to give you. 'I do not like you, Doctor Fell; the reason why, I cannot tell.' If you understood anything of the doctrine of innate antipathies, you would know at once what I mean."

"If ever I heard such rubbish, Silas! I've really no patience with you. There is no more thorough lady than Miss Davenant in all Helsingham. But never mind that. It's her goodness—her kind heart and her charity—that makes her seem to me little less than an angel. Why, it was only last week that she gave away her second-best gown and her very best petticoat, and goodness only knows what oddments besides, to a poor lady who had got a situation as governess somewhere or other, but was short of things to go in. And all the time Miss Davenant herself is that poor, from one cause or another, that she can't afford herself even one new dress this summer, but just goes on wearing away at her old black silk, that's getting as rusty with age as a grate that's never been black-leaded for six months."

"Ah, you love her very much, I dare say!" sneered Silas.

"And haven't I reason to love her, Silas Ringe, and to reverence her, too? Who else in all the wide world has done as much for me and mine as Miss Davenant has done? You know that I am greatly beholden to her; I've often told you so; but now, to-night, I mean to tell you how much I am beholden to her, and then you can judge for yourself whether or no I have reason to feel towards her as I do."

Silas shrugged his shoulders, as much as to say, "Whatever you may urge in favour of Miss Davenant will not influence my opinion of that lady in the least;" and, indeed, the secret of his dislike for Margaret might be traced to the fact of Esther liking her so well. He was so morbidly and absurdly jealous that it was only necessary that Esther should speak in terms of admiration or liking of any person, male or female, and Silas would at once begin to sneer and to depreciate the person in question; nor would his ill-humour give way till Esther's soft words had smoothed down his ruffled plumage. Sometimes, however, she chose to tease him into a tiff, when the two would play for four-and-twenty hours at not being friends, only to forget utterly all cause for ill-feeling in less than two minutes after they next met.

"When my father died, five years ago," began Esther, "my mother was left with four children, of whom I was the eldest, and the only one able to do anything towards earning their own living. I was away in service at that time, and my mother just struggled on as well as she could; but her health was bad, and after a time she almost got past hard work of any kind. She was a Helsingham woman, born and bred; so at last she took it into her head that she would move

nere, and try whether, among all the people she had known as a girl, she couldn't get enough to do in the way of clear-starching and the better sort of laundry work, to keep herself and the little ones out of the Union. Well, she set out for Helsingham, but fell ill on the road, and by the time she reached here she was so bad that she didn't even know her own name. The country carrier in whose cart she had come part of the way set down her and her three crying children at the little public-house close by Irongate House. The landlady, being a charitable soul, took them all in, and then sent for Miss Easterbrook; but it being holiday-time, that lady was from home, and Miss Davenant went instead. She at once sent for a doctor, and by his advice my mother was moved to the hospital, while the children were boarded out at the house of a decent labouring man hard by. It was Miss Davenant who paid for their board all the time mother was in the hospital; and she used to visit her there three or four times a week, and take her grapes and other nice things, and read and talk to her, and cheer up her spirits wonderful. Well, hardly had mother got about again, when Willy, the next eldest to me, was taken ill and died; and it was out of Miss Davenant's purse that all the funeral expenses were paid. Then there was work to be found for mother, and it was all through Miss Davenant and Miss Easterbrook that she got into nice, easy, respectable employment, that kept her comfortable as long as she lived. But that was not long, poor dear! for her health broke again, and after a month's illness she died. Before this, I had been sent for to come and nurse her, and I was with her to the last. She had contrived to save up a couple of pounds, and I had about four pounds more, so that the funeral was got over without having to ask anybody for a farthing. For myself, I knew that I could have got my living anywhere; but however I should have managed with Polly and Jenny, who were only six and eight years old, I know no more than the dead, if Miss Davenant had not stepped in again, and contrived to interest some rich ladies in the affair. And so after a while a home was found for them in an orphan asylum near London, and there they are living still, as happy as two little queens. Well, to make a long story short, I heard a little while after that a housemaid was wanted at Irongate House, so I went about the place and got it, and you may judge how pleased I was when I found that part of my duty was to act as Miss Davenant's own maid; and there I've been ever since. And if it wasn't that you, you ridiculous old darling, had plagued me into promising to marry you, I should have wished for nothing better than to live and die in her service."

There was a fulness in her throat and a moisture in her eyes as Esther ended her narrative; but Silas remained utterly unmoved. "Here's my best respects to Miss Davenant," he said, as he took off his hat with a low, sweeping bow, "and my humble wishes for her health and happiness." But there was something in the tone of his

voice that grated on Esther's sensitive ear, and sent a thrill of pain to her heart.

CHAPTER XXV.

INTRODUCTIONS.

It was not to be expected that Hugh Randolph, all of whose transactions with the world were marked by a sort of veiled impetuosity, would make a very patient or long-winded lover; and scarcely had he won Trix's consent to become his wife, before he nearly took her breath away by pressing her to name an early day for the wedding. Trix was frightened. Till that moment she had hardly realized in all its seriousness the position in which she had placed herself. She had looked forward vaguely in her own mind to an indefinite term of pleasant sunny courtship, with marriage of course at the end of it, but very far in the distance as yet; but here was a volcanic young surgeon, whom she seemed to have known only since yesterday, teasing and badgering her to become his wife on the first of next month! It was really shocking! And she burst away from her lover, and ran up to her own room, and had a good cry.

But Trix's tears did not mend matters in the least. On going down she found that Hugh, when left alone, had at once hunted up Margaret and Miss Easterbrook, and finding them together, had so worked upon the feelings of those unprotected females, alternately bullying and cajoling them, that at length Miss Davenant, in sheer self-defence, had been obliged to name the day.

"And the day is—" said Trix, trembling with Love's vague alarms.

"The twentieth of September," said Miss Easterbrook solemnly. "And a very nice time too," she added; "though how we are ever to get all your things ready by that date is more than I can imagine."

"You ought, both of you, to be ashamed of yourselves!" said Trix, in a sudden access of passion, while angry flashes shot from her bonny brown eyes, and her cheek deepened its colour. "You treat me as if I were a child. You make me feel as if I hated you both. And I don't care for Dr. Randolph a bit. And I won't be married on the twentieth of September. I'll never get married. There!"

And with a stamp of the foot to emphasize that last little word, Ma'amselle Trix sailed out of the room, and pulled to the door with a bang that echoed through the old house.

"How pretty she looks when she is out of temper!" said Miss Easterbrook admiringly. "Even my old china could not match the lovely rose-pink of her cheeks."

"Her mind will soon learn to familiarize itself with the idea of a speedy marriage," said Margaret. "By-and-by she will even be grateful to us for having legislated for her so wisely."

Next time Hugh came, Trix did not fail to let him see that she

was seriously annoyed at his conduct. The hard-hearted wretch only laughed at her, and tried to win her over with kisses; but she broke away from him indignantly, and knowing that she should meet with no sympathy either from Miss Easterbrook or her sister, she had no remedy but to court once again the dreary solitude of her own room and there relieve her heart with another burst of tears. But when next morning came—that morning in whose clear, cold light our little affairs of over-night put on such a very different aspect—and there were no more tears left to shed, poor Trix began to ask herself whether she had not been acting very much like a goose. Of course, if she were really determined not to marry Hugh on the twentieth of September, neither Margaret nor any one else could force her to do so against her will. But was she really so determined? Was she prepared to stand out in radical opposition to the wishes of Hugh and Margaret and Miss Easterbrook? And would she really have cared for Hugh as much as she did care for him had he been less ardent and headstrong in the matter, and willing to postpone the day indefinitely in obedience to her wishes? These were some of the questions which she asked herself, but which she did not pause to answer. Instead, she bathed her eyes, and put on her prettiest muslin, and went down, all smiles and amiability. Later in the day came a note from Hugh, enclosing tickets for a concert. Trix was very gracious to her lover that evening—very winning and very tender; and although nothing more was said just then about the wedding, it was tacitly understood by all concerned that the day as fixed by Margaret was to hold good.

Hugh Randolph's life at that time was a very busy one, and his visits to his lady-love were necessarily brief, and fewer in number than they would have been in the case of a man less absorbingly occupied. But Hugh was just the sort of man to rejoice in a life so thoroughly filled up. To keep him a morning at home without employment would have been a sure way of rendering him miserable. The more jaded he was when he got back from his last ronnd, the better tempered he was sure to be. Old Dr. Heeltap, who was seventy if he was a day, could not possibly go on much longer; and whenever he should retire, Hugh looked forward to a considerable accession of practice, and that among the better class of Helsingham people. He was clever, brimful of energy, and in love with his profession, and, consequently, tolerably sure to succeed.

About a fortnight after Hugh had broken the fact of his engagement to Mrs. Sutton, he was the bearer of a note from that lady to Margaret and Trix, inviting them to drink tea at her house on a certain afternoon. The old lady had gradually become reconciled to the idea of her favourite Hugh becoming the husband of the younger Miss Davenant. Charlotte Herne had also been invited to drink tea at Mrs. Sutton's this afternoon, and had agreed to be there. As a rule, Charlotte was painfully shy in the company of strangers, but since an

introduction to Margaret and Trix was inevitable, she gladly availed herself of the shelter of Mrs. Sutton's motherly wing during the trying ordeal of the first interview. With that lady, as being a friend of the family, and one whom she remembered ever since she could remember anything, she was quite at home and used to flit in and out of her house, without ceremony, as often as she felt inclined for a bit of gossip about old times and people long since dead whom both of them had known.

After that little scene on the night Hugh broke the news of his approaching marriage to Charlotte, which the young doctor was far from attributing to any other cause than commonplace illness, the blind girl, in the course of a few days, so far schooled her feelings as to be able to question Hugh of her own accord, and as though it were the most natural thing in the world, respecting his engagement, and that very charming young lady who was about to become his wife. What was the colour of her eyes and hair? was she dark or light? tall or short? and was it really true that she was so very, very accomplished? These, and a thousand other questions, were all put by Charlotte with the most ingenuous air possible; and Hugh, one may be sure, was nothing loth to answer her, and was genuinely pleased to think that poor blind Charley was at length about to meet with a friend of her own sex and age, who would cheer her solitary life and sympathize with her under her terrible misfortune.

Mrs. Sutton was sitting as usual in her high-backed black leather chair, busily knitting, and Charlotte was seated a little way behind her in the shade of the red moreen curtains which, winter and summer, festooned the windows of the old lady's sitting-room, when Miss Davenant and her sister were announced. Mrs. Sutton and Margaret had met once or twice at the meetings of the Dorcas Society, so that no introduction was necessary between them, and they now shook hands with the cordiality of old acquaintance. Margaret then introduced her sister.

"Ay, ay, ay!" said the old lady, as she proceeded to adjust her spectacles, preliminary to taking a good long stare at the blushing Trix. "So this is the young lady that has stolen my boy's heart, is it? Hum! Yes. A right-down bonny English face, I must say. Come and kiss me, dear; I feel that I shall like you very much indeed."

Trix obeyed with the best grace in the world, and gave the old lady a couple of hearty kisses. "I see they have not quite spoiled you by sending you to France," resumed Mrs. Sutton. "You're still English at heart in spite of the monseers."

"Thoroughly English, I hope," said Trix. "Living abroad has only made my own country all the dearer to me."

"Now that's spoken like a sensible girl, and shows that you are not a bit stuck up. But, dear heart alive! here am I forgetting that poor Charlotte Herne has not yet been introduced to you. This is

her sitting behind me. Come forward, child, and don't be so shy; you look as frightened as a chicken in a thunderstorm. That's Miss Davenant whose hand you have hold of now; and this one is Miss Beatrice, she that's to be your Cousin Hugh's wife." Then she added in an aside, which was of course just as audible to Charlotte as to those for whose behoof it was intended. "Blind, poor thing! struck by lightning. But I dare say Hugh has told you all about her."

How Charlotte hated herself for her absurd shyness, the effect of a morbid state of the nerves that with her was almost constitutional! Her spirit at that moment was as undaunted as ever it had been, and if some of her thoughts just then had been put into words, they would have astonished those present considerably. Margaret saw the pained look that flitted across the girl's face when Mrs. Sutton, with that absence of delicacy for the feelings of others on which she was wont to pride herself, spoke of her blindness. But Charlotte's set conventional smile was back again next moment, that smile which never took in her beautiful hungrily-wistful eyes, and after a faint pressure of the hand, and a quiet, cold "How do you do?" to each of the sisters, she resumed her seat behind Mrs. Sutton, and went on quietly with her crochet work.

Mrs. Sutton was quite correct in assuming that Hugh had told Trix all that he knew respecting Charlotte. He had told her story, and had then put it to Trix whether she would have any objection to Charlotte still continuing to live under his roof after their marriage; if there was any, the least objection, he went on to say, he would make arrangements for Charlotte to reside with Mrs. Sutton. But the romantic side of Trix's disposition was roused by the blind girl's sad story, and she vowed that if Hugh said another word about Charlotte's removal, she would never speak to him again. She was sure, she said, that she and Charlotte should get on famously together and soon come to like each other very much, and be good company for each other when his lordship was out visiting his patients.

Margaret was a good listener, and always made a point of adapting herself to whatever society she might happen to be in; so, on the present occasion, she sat down near Mrs. Sutton, and following that lady's lead, entered into an animated discussion on household economy, the state of the markets, and the laws of demand and supply in their relation to the larders of middle-class families.

For Trix, indeed, the conversation that was going on between Mrs. Sutton and Margaret had but slight interest: the responsibilities of housekeeping had not as yet descended upon her, and she had no notion of meeting the cares of married life halfway. She had other food for her thoughts just then: she was thinking about Charlotte Herne. She had come to this interview with her mind full of compassion for the blind girl—with a determination to like her, to love

her even, and to do all she possibly could to lighten the burden of her great affliction.

But from the moment she felt the touch of that small cold hand, as cold almost as that of a corpse it seemed on this hot summer day, and heard that quiet, formal "How do you do?" Trix's heart shrank within her at the prospect of the task she had set herself to do. Something within her seemed to whisper that any feeling of compassion she might entertain for Charlotte would be utterly thrown away; that Charlotte would take the expression of any such feeling as an insult: that if it came to a question of liking or love, there ought to be two people to the bargain, and that it was just possible Charlotte might not stand in need of her love, nor indeed care anything for it. As she sat there, so neat, so prim, so shyly modest, with her grey Quaker-like dress, and her spotless collar and cuffs, quietly intent on her crochet-work, most people would have felt that compassion and love from anyone would have come as welcome guests to Charlotte. Yet Trix, musing on this matter, seemed to have a sort of dim apprehension that the girl before her was more of a human enigma than anyone she had ever met before—an enigma whom it might, perhaps, prove beyond her simple skill ever to interpret aright. As their hands met, Trix experienced a slight feeling of repulsion, not unmixed with fear. Her flesh chilled to the chill momentary touch of Charlotte's fingers. She was taking herself to task for this "absurd childishness," as she called it, when the conversation between Margaret and Mrs. Sutton came to an end, and tea was announced.

Now, tea with Mrs. Sutton was the grand ceremonial meal of the day. She dined at one o'clock to the minute all the year round, Sundays excepted, on which day the cloth was laid half an hour later, out of compliment to the sermon. But dinner, with Mrs. Sutton and her clique, was the heavy business meal of the day; requisite on the score of health, but eaten quietly, and in secret, as it were, as though there was an element of vulgarity about it. But with tea how different! To be enjoyed properly, the fragrant leaf must be supplemented by dress. One's last winter's silk turned would serve very well if there happened to be no particular company, in which case one's second-best cap might do duty with it; but, in any case, one's company manners must not be forgotten—a cheerful stateliness that never condescended into familiarity even with one's oldest friends.

In honour of the present occasion, Mrs. Sutton had brought out her old china, which was hideously ugly but very choice. As Martha, her maid, set it down tenderly in front of her, the old lady's memory took a sudden leap backward to that day, now forty years ago, when she, a girlish bride, with a world of bright hopes before her, handled that china for the first time, as she sat for the first time at the head of her husband's table, in all the glory of fresh and tender

wifehood. What a little while ago it seemed to her, and yet what a difference between then and now!

It was not often that Mrs. Sutton indulged in sentimental recollections, and in the present case she was speedily brought back to mundane matters by the fizzing of the bright little kettle on the hob. With slow, elaborate courtesy, she proceeded to serve out the precious beverage, inquiring particularly of each of her guests whether their tea was sweetened to their liking. As soon as the first cups were all fairly under way, she was ready for a little more conversation.

"I hope, my dear," she said, turning to Trix, "that when you and Hugh are safely married, you will try to break your husband of that bad habit he has got into of having six o'clock dinners, and establish instead a tea-table of your own. Hugh's father, and grandfather before him, dined at one o'clock, and what can be his reason for changing the hour to six, unless it is to follow a bad fashion, I for one cannot tell. However, if my advice is of any avail, you will try to bring him back to the good old plan. Another bit of sugar, Charlotte? I know of old that you are a sweet-tooth. Yes, my dear, you must certainly have your tea-table, if you wish to be a person of any consequence in Helsingham. I dare say, now, that you don't know much about whist? No, I was afraid not. That's rather a pity, because there's a considerable amount of whist played in society during the winter months. But you must cultivate yourself in that respect. Ah! my dear, many cares will devolve upon you when you are married that you little dream of now. All men, even the best of them, have their little peculiarities of temper and disposition; and if you don't set out by trying to discover them, and adapt yourself to them, you can hardly hope that your married life will be a happy one. And as for servants——That's Hugh's knock! I'd know it out of a thousand. He's just in time to have a cup with us. Dishwater, he calls it; but that's just like men—always depreciating what they are fond of; for Hugh likes a good cup of tea as well as anybody."

CHAPTER XXVI.

CHARLOTTE'S SALAD.

Hugh accepted his cup of tea without demur. A glance at Mrs. Sutton's face served to show him that, so far, everything had gone off smoothly; for he had been a little afraid that the plain-spoken old woman might in some way offend the susceptibilities of Margaret or Trix; or that she herself, in her prejudiced, crotchety way, might take a dislike to the latter, in which case she would not hesitate a moment in letting it be seen. Therefore was the young surgeon considerably relieved at finding the old lady in one of her most amiable moods; and he sat down beside her, quite prepared to be a good boy, and obey her behests in everything. He sat down between her

and Charlotte, tweaking the ear of the latter as he did so, and opposite Trix.

"He has seated himself here so that he may have her right before his eyes," said Charlotte to herself. "How hateful it is of people to do their courting before others! I shouldn't care if I was dead this minute!"

As soon as tea was over, Mrs. Sutton proposed that they should take "a turn round the garden," which all were quite willing to do. Not that the garden, when they reached it, was much of a place to look at, for the old lady was in the habit of mixing up her red cabbages, her flowers, and her gooseberry bushes—on the principle of making every inch of ground productive of something—in a way that might be pleasing to herself, but was certainly far from ornamental in the eyes of others. But there was the fresh air, and the mellow evening sunshine, and two or three wide, dry walks, so that altogether it was not such an undesirable place for a promenade.

Mrs. Sutton had meditated securing Trix to herself for a short half hour, and favouring her with the first of a series of lectures on household management, which she had mentally undertaken for her benefit. "For she's wofully ignorant, poor young thing!" the old lady had said to herself; "and will be glad to have somebody by her with a head on their shoulders, and who can put her in the way of managing a bit."

But no sooner had Mrs. Sutton set foot in the garden, than she saw with dismay that the previous night's wind had been playing havoc among her currant-trees; so, with a little cry of vexation, she hurried back into the house to get her hammer, her nails and her scraps of listing, and then set busily to work to repair the damage. Hugh proffered his assistance, but was quickly scouted.

"What do you know about gardening, I should like to hear? Your own place at home is a disgrace to you, that it is. No, no; my own hands shall attend to my own trees; when I want help, I'll ask for it."

Thus repulsed, but in nowise abashed, Hugh turned to Trix, with the evident intention of monopolizing that young lady for some time to come. But not even here was he to succeed.

"Thank you, sir, but my answer is No," said Trix, with a pretty pout. "You elderly people can herd together, Margaret here will, I dare say, gather you under her wing, and entertain you with a little scientific conversation. As for Charlotte and me, we, who are not scientific, are going to have a little walk, and a little talk, all to ourselves." And taking the blind girl's arm, and placing it within her own, the two wandered off together down one of the broad garden walks.

"You will let me call you Charlotte, won't you, dear?" said Trix, in her pretty, insinuating way. "For I mean to love you very much, and I want you to try whether you can't like me a little in return.

No, I want you to like me a great deal. Hugh has talked about you I can't tell you how often, so that I seem to have known you quite a long time; and when I shall be Hugh's wife (here a lovely little blush would come), I hope that you and I will be like sisters to each other."

Charlotte stopped suddenly in her walk, and withdrawing her hand, clutched that of Trix; and turning on her with sightless eyes and white, intense face, she muttered some words rapidly, and half below her breath, so that Trix could not catch their import; but they sounded so terribly like a curse that the girl shrank back instinctively, and was smitten with a sudden fear for her companion's sanity. But Charlotte was her quiet, composed self again next moment, and had replaced her arm within that of Trix. "Merely my style of calling down a blessing on our new-found friendship," she said with that weird laugh of hers, which had not a particle of mirth in it. "Oh, I'm a strange creature if you only knew me thoroughly."

"I hope to know and understand you better by-and-bye," said Trix warmly. "At least, the fault shall not be on my side if I don't."

"Ah, you are young and happy, and warm-hearted," said Charlotte drily; and just now you feel that it's possible for you to love anybody. But when you shall have grown a little older, and have learnt to know me better, you will find that I am one of those people whom it is impossible ever to like."

"I hope not; I cannot think so," said Trix earnestly.

"Time will prove the truth of my words," responded Charlotte. "Nobody ever did like me for long, except my mother. But I don't want people to like me; I only want to be left to myself. I'm like the Miller of Dee. I care for nobody, no, not I, and nobody cares for me. Shocking sentiments, are they not, for a girl like me to give utterance to? But I am not one of your amiable, namby-pamby misses, and Hugh ought to have told you so when he was talking about me."

"You say that no one ever likes you for long," answered Trix. "On that point I am sure you are mistaken. Hugh has known you for a number of years, and yet I am positive that he is very fond of you, and always speaks of you most affectionately. Then, too, there's Mrs. Sutton, who—"

"Yes, yes, we understand all about that," said Charlotte bitterly. "But, do you know, I am not fond of milk and water. Can the heart be fed on such food, and feel satisfied? Tell me, however—you who know what it is to love and be loved—do you know what it is to hate?"

"Thank Heaven, no!" answered Trix.

"Then you don't know what it is to drink the full measure of life. Oh, to hate! to hate! to hate!" said the blind girl with slow, venomous intensity. "It is a grand—a kingly passion! There is

nothing mean or despicable about it. It is the tonic of the soul; as bitter as wormwood to the taste, but oh! so strengthening. Learn to hate! learn to hate!"

"To learn to love were wiser by far," said Trix sadly. "But surely, Charlotte, you do not speak of yourself as one who hates another with such shocking intensity of feeling?"

"Why not?" asked Charlotte abruptly. "Why should I not enjoy this kingly passion? Come nearer. Let me tell you something. You must know that I have a secret enemy. Now do you understand?"

"No, I am as much at a loss as ever," answered Trix.

"Then it is you who are blind, and not I," said Charlotte with a laugh. "One day, perhaps, my riddles will all be made plain to you. Hark! the Abbey clock is striking seven. It is the time I told Tib to come and fetch me. For the present, I must say farewell; but you and I will some day talk of these things further. Remember, I told you at the outset that you would never like me."

They all pressed Charlotte to stay a while longer, but she was not to be dissuaded from her purpose. Tib was waiting for her, and go she would without further delay. Trix took her hand at parting and pressed it affectionately, and was just stooping forward to kiss her, when Charlotte who felt the movement, drew back a little haughtily, and addressed some commonplace remark to Mrs. Sutton, while the feelings of poor, mortified Trix underwent a sudden collapse.

Charlotte was unusually silent all the way home, but when they reached the Doctor's house she bade Tib go up with her to her own room. "Light the lamp and await my return," she said; and with that she left Tib in the sitting-room, and went up alone to the loft at the top of the house.

The skeleton was standing where it always stood, in its open case close to the door of the loft. Mounted on a chair, Charlotte, with a dainty thumb and finger, proceeded to fish out of the orifice of the skull the folded scrap of paper which she had hidden away there some few weeks before. Then she went back to her own room, where Tib was waiting for her. Tenderly and caressingly, as though it were a bank-note for a thousand pounds, Charlotte proceeded to spread open the scrap of paper, and smooth out the creases; then handing it abruptly to Tib, she said, "Read!"

Tib took the piece of paper and proceeded slowly, and with a pause between each word, to read aloud what was written on it:

"I WILL KILL HER!
"I SWEAR IT!
"CHARLOTTE.
"*Aug. 5th.*"

Smiling Charlotte, rubbing her hands gleefully, and with her head a little on one side, nodded emphasis to each word as Tib read.

"Oh, miss, whatever does it mean?" demanded Tib with an air of stupefaction.

"One must not let one's acquirements rust because one happens to be blind," said Charlotte demurely. "Writing, especially, ought not to be neglected."

"Then it is only meant for a bit of fun?" inquired Tib with an air of relief.

"Oh, yes, it's very funny—excruciatingly funny!" exclaimed Charlotte. "Little beast! why don't you laugh? Is not the joke a good one?"

"Written in red ink too," said Tib evasively.

"Yes, in the very brightest and best of red inks. Is it not a pretty document?"

"A pretty what, miss?"

"Is it not nicely written?"

"Oh, yes, miss; that it is! Bootifully written," answered Tib with alacrity.

"Hypocrite!" sneered Charlotte. "You would swear anything to serve your own wretched little ends. Go! I have no further need for you to-day; and tell the cook, as you pass through the house, to mix me a nice salad, and send it me upstairs ready chopped, with plenty of vinegar."

"Yes, miss, that I will: and I wish you a very good evening."

"Stop!" added Charlotte suddenly, as Tib turned to go; and darting upon her she twined her fingers in the girl's thick hair, and twisted her head round, till Tib screamed with pain. "Treacherous little devil!" hissed Charlotte. "Dare to whisper a word more than I give you leave to say about me or my business to those wretches downstairs, and I'll put a spell on you that shall wither up both your arms, and make your chin sprout with hair like a man's, and put a squint into one of your eyes that shall make everything you look at seem as if it was askew and tumbling to pieces. Oh, I know how to do it! and I will do it, unless you are as silent as death itself. Now go."

Tib, thoroughly frightened for once, waited for no second bidding.

"The salad will be here by the time I've rinsed my hands," said Charlotte to herself. "How will it taste, I wonder, flavoured with my new *sauce piquante?*" She went musingly into the next room and washed her hands. "If I were a man," she said, "I should have twenty modes of putting an enemy quietly out of the way; but being a woman, I have only one. Well, I don't know that it matters greatly if that one only prove effectual. Have you chopped the salad up fine?" asked Charlotte of the girl whose duty it was to wait upon her, and who, being new to the place, was still in the sympathetic stage, not having as yet had her feelings outraged by the caprices of her blind mistress.

"Yes, ma'am; it's chopped up ever so fine, and all nicely mixed; and here's the vinegar."

"That will do, Susan. I will ring when I want you to clear away the things."

Left alone, Charlotte sat listening intently till the last echo of Susan's footsteps had died away; then from her workbox she fetched a pair of tiny scissors, bright and sharp, and taking the scrap of paper from the bosom of her dress, she proceeded to snip it with her scissors, bit by bit, into the salad bowl below. When the last morsel had fluttered from her fingers, she laughed aloud and clapped her hands. "There!" she cried gleefully, "that is my *sauce piquante*, from a recipe of my own. It's hotter than the hottest Indian pickle that was ever invented, and a little of it goes a very long way. People of weak stomach had better avoid it." Then seating herself at the table, she poured vinegar into the bowl, and stirred the contents about with a fork and spoon, till the whole was sufficiently mixed. Then she began to eat. Slowly and deliberately she ate, with a sort of malignant relish that would not have done discredit to the veriest witch that ever bestrode a broomstick.

At length the salad was finished, eaten up, paper and all, to the last morsel. "Such a feast would lack fitting conclusion," said Charlotte, "were I to omit drinking the health of the fair bride elect."

In one of her cupboards was a decanter containing brandy—not that Charlotte was fond of brandy, for both in her eating and drinking she was one of the most abstemious of mortals; but she had been ordered by Hugh to take a little now and then medicinally; and she now poured out for herself a tiny dram. She raised the glass to her lips, and then paused for a moment. "These are my best wishes," she said; and with that she went off into a string of gibberish, of the same sort that had so startled Trix in Mrs. Sutton's garden. This rigmarole was an invention of which Charlotte was very proud. It was formed by tagging an extra syllable to each word, and then running the whole rapidly together; and not even Hugh could understand what she said when she addressed him in what she called her "dead language;" but Tib and she could converse in it by the hour together. What Charlotte said in the present instance was known to herself alone. If she were calling down blessings on the head of Trix, they must have been blessings in disguise, for they had all the sound of something much more unpleasant.

"I hope you enjoyed your supper, ma'am," said Susan respectfully, when she came upstairs to clear away the things.

"The salad was delicious," said Charlotte; "the nicest I ever tasted."

"Thank you, ma'am; I am very glad to hear it. And, if you please, ma'am, could you spare me for an hour this evening, while I go home to see how my little lame brother is getting on?"

"You told me a day or two ago, did you not, that he was very ill?"

"Yes, ma'am, very ill; we hardly expect him to get round again."

"Poor little fellow! and lame! Yes, Susan, go by all means. And here's half-a-crown for you to buy some grapes with; and tell cook to give you a bottle of sherry to take with you."

"Oh, ma'am, you are too kind! The doctor at the dispensary says he wants nourishment as much as anything; but mother is *so* poor."

"You are very fond of this lame brother, are you not, Susan?"

"Yes, ma'am, very. You see, his not being like other people naturally draws one to him. We all seem to think more of him, on account of his misfortune, than we do of them as are strong and hearty and able to fend for theirselves. And I wish you a very good night, ma'am, and many thanks."

Charlotte, with her back turned to Susan, did not answer. She was crying.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE MISSING LETTER.

Charlotte Herne had barely said her adieus to the company in the garden, and set off home, escorted by Tib, before Hugh Randolph, by an adroit movement in flank, took Ma'amselle Trix unawares; who, finding further escape denied her, yielded with a pretty pout, and allowed her lover to put her arm within his and lead her off in custody down one of the garden walks.

"How did Cousin Charley and you get on together, and what do you think of her?" said Hugh to Trix.

"As for how we got on together, I can hardly tell you," answered Trix. "The girl is an enigma, and whether I shall ever really understand her is more than I can tell; but certainly I am very far from doing so at present."

"The poor thing is so shy when in the presence of strangers; and then her blindness, and the almost utter seclusion in which she lives, impart a certain oddness to her sayings and doings: but this will soon wear off, as far as you are concerned, when you come to know her better."

"I should like to like her—I should love to love her," said Trix, "but I don't think she wants either my liking or my love."

Hugh, as in duty bound, pooh-poohed this latter supposition very decidedly; as if, he went on to say, anybody in their senses could do other than long for the love of his darling Trix. And then, under the favour of this compliment, and the shelter of a screen of honeysuckles the audacious wretch suddenly attempted to steal a kiss; but Trix, warned by previous experience, was not to be caught unawares, and repulsed the cowardly attack with the utmost bravery.

It was only in keeping with our Trix's sweet disposition that she

should quickly forgive a discomfited enemy: but scarcely had the basis of a fresh treaty of peace been adjusted between the two, when a summons came for Dr. Randolph: a gentleman was waiting for him at his own house, who wished to see him without delay.

A professional summons, at whatever hour of the day or night it might come, never found Hugh Randolph otherwise than ready and willing to attend to it; but, on the present occasion he certainly did wish that his unknown visitor, whoever he might be, had delayed coming for another hour. Still, he never thought of disregarding the summons; so, after pulling a wry face for the edification of Trix, he at once set off after the servant who had come to fetch him, but not without first promising to come back in a little while, or to send word should he be unable to do so.

Hugh gone, the three ladies at once went indoors. Wines were brought out, not merely port and sherry, but in addition, two or three sorts of genuine home-made—cowslip, raisin and ginger—of the concoction of which Mrs. Sutton was justly proud.

"If I was only certain that Hugh would be back before long," said Mrs. Sutton, a little later on, "I would send across for Mrs. Malham, and we might manage a quiet rubber before supper time, for I need hardly ask you, Miss Davenant, whether you play that noble game?"

"Yes, I play—a little," said Margaret.

"I thought I could not be mistaken in my supposition," answered the old lady, with a stately inclination of the head. "As for Miss Trix, she might amuse herself either by looking on and studying the points of the game, or by a little agreeable reading. There are some suitable volumes in that bookcase behind you. 'The Cottage on the Cliff,' for instance, in five volumes, illustrated: a charming story. I remember reading it when I was a girl, and—But here comes Hugh back again, and quite in a hurry, too. See, Miss Davenant, how the minx is smiling already. Fie! Fie!"

Hugh did, indeed, come in hurriedly, and they all saw in a moment that something more than ordinary must have happened.

"At last, the discovery!" thought Margaret, and she nerved herself for the coming revelation.

"Such a strange thing!" said Hugh, and then he stopped to laugh. "The gentleman waiting for me proved to be a Mr. Peterson, a lawyer from Melbourne, Australia. His first act on my entering the room was to present me with his card; his second, to congratulate me on what he was pleased to term my 'remarkable good fortune.' I read his card, and then asked for information as to what my good fortune consisted of. 'You received my letter of April last?' he said. 'Never had the pleasure of receiving a line from you in my life,' I replied. 'Strange, very strange!' he muttered, rubbing his chin thoughtfully. 'That accounts for our London agents not having received any communication from you in the matter. The

non-arrival of my advice, however, must be a matter for subsequent inquiry; and the pleasure of being the first to congratulate you in person still rests with me.' 'But why congratulate me?' I asked somewhat testily, for I began to have my doubts as to the fellow's sanity. 'I congratulate you,' he said in a solemn voice, 'because, by the last will and testament of the late lamented Benjamin Gudge, Esquire, of Melbourne, Australia, you, Hugh Randolph, surgeon, of Helsingham, England, are appointed sole heir and legatee to all his property of every description whatsoever; the same being of the estimated annual value of four thousand eight hundred pounds.' I was more than ever convinced now that the man was insane, but I determined to try him a little further. 'There must be some mistake,' I said. 'Never heard of such a person as your Australian Mr. Gudge.' 'No mistake whatever,' said Mr. Peterson, with a smile of gentle pity at my ignorance. 'Oblige me by reading this excerpt of the will of our late lamented client;' and with that he opened his pocket-book as brisk as you please, and fished out of it a strip of foolscap covered with that ugly upright hand which lawyers so much affect. 'This,' said he, 'will doubtless act as a refresher to your memory. At all events, it will serve to enlighten you as to the reason for our late lamented client having acted as he has done.' I was not long you may be sure, in mastering the contents of the paper he had given me; but even before I got to the end of it, I saw and understood the strange mistake into which Mr. Peterson had fallen, and that without any fault on his part. You, aunty"—this to Mrs. Sutton—"will understand the case at once when I tell you that this lawyer from over the sea had come to me instead of going to my cousin Hugo."

"But is Hugo really coming into four thousand eight hundred a-year?" demanded the old lady.

"So it would seem," replied the Doctor. "The document handed me by Mr. Peterson recounted how the property in question was bequeathed to Hugh Randolph on account of his having, on one occasion, several years ago, saved the testator's life at the risk of his own; and how the testator, being without kith or kin, had, out of sheer gratitude, endowed his preserver with every farthing of which he might die possessed. As I read this, it came suddenly into my mind how Hugo had once told me of his having saved the life of a rich Australian merchant who fell overboard somewhere off Cape Horn—as you will remember, Hugo, in his younger days, was a ship's surgeon—and how disgusted he, Hugo, was at being offered a couple of sovereigns as a reward for the risk he had run. But the old fellow, although he could not bear parting with money in his lifetime, has proved that he was not ungrateful. Why, Hugo will be quite a millionaire!"

"A worthless, idle scamp!" exclaimed Mrs. Sutton irately. "I never had any pa'ience with him. And now all this good fortune

must come to him, though he never did a decent day's work in his lifetime; while there's others as may go on from year's end to year's end working their insides out and scraping and contriving to make ends meet, and be as poor as a church mouse when all's done! But this world's a strange riddle, and one needs a deal of patience at times to make one take things quietly."

"Tut, tut, aunty, don't you begrudge Hugo his good fortune," said Hugh cheerily. "He is one of those happy mortals who are born not to work. To such as him work is an impossibility. Why blame him, then, for what is not his fault? But as for you and me, aunty, we belong to the plodders: not a bad sort, perhaps, as the world goes."

"You said something about a letter," said Margaret, in a slow, laboured, husky voice, very different from the modulated, clear tones in which she usually spoke; but the others were too excited just then to notice the difference.

"Ah, yes, to be sure," said Hugh; "and that is not the least curious part of the business. Mr. Peterson states that about five months ago he sent off, fully addressed to me, a letter, of which he has brought a copy with him, containing the news which we have had from him to-day by word of mouth, and asking that my instructions in the matter, on proof of identification being furnished, should be sent to the agents of his firm in London. This letter has not been received by me, and Mr. Peterson is so much annoyed at its non-delivery that he intends to have the matter laid before the Post-Office authorities; indeed, had he not had other business in England which obliged him to come over in person, it is not unlikely that Mr. Gudge's last will and testament might have remained a dead-letter for some time to come."

"But how does it happen," asked Trix, "that the letter intended for your cousin should be posted to your address?" It was a question that had been on Margaret's lips, but she was glad to be spared the necessity of asking it.

"That is easily explained," said Hugh. "Probably neither you nor Margaret are sufficiently acquainted with my history to be aware that the person of whom I purchased my practice on first coming to Helsingham was my cousin, Hugo Randolph. Such, however, was the case. Both my cousin and I were brought up to the profession of medicine, but Hugo, being the elder by several years, had obtained his diploma while I was still at school. As I have already stated, he acted for some time as surgeon on board ship, but afterwards he came and settled down in Helsingham. At least, he ought to have settled down; but Hugo never liked his profession, and on the strength of a small legacy left him by an aunt he determined to free himself for ever from slavery, as he called it. At that time I was just ready to enter on the scene: so Hugo made over his practice to me, and the people of Helsingham exchanged one cousin for the other.

During the time that Hugo was following his profession here, Mr. Gudge, who happened to be over in England on business, came down to Helsingham to see him; and as he seems to have drawn up his will shortly after his return to Australia, he naturally put down Hugo's address as he knew it to be at that time; and it appears never to have been altered, for my cousin is the most careless of correspondents, and, without doubt, never troubled himself sufficiently to inform Mr. Gudge of his change of residence. As to how the mistake between the two names, Hugo and Hugh, arose—whether Mr. Gudge by a very natural error, put down the wrong name in his will, or whether the letter that was sent but never came to hand was directed in one name or the other, is really a matter of very little moment, and one which, at this stage of the business, it were hardly worth inquiring into. And now I think that you all know as much of the affair as I do myself."

"But where is this Mr. Peterson? and what steps does he purpose taking next?" asked Mrs. Sutton.

"Gone back to his hotel to dine with what appetite he may," answered Hugh. "But to see how crestfallen he was when I explained the mistake to him! However, we will put him all right to-morrow, for, as it happens, I had a note from Hugo this morning in which he states that I may expect to see him early to-morrow, as he shall be passing through Helsingham on his way north. This is fortunate both for Hugo and Mr. Peterson, whom I shall have the pleasure of introducing to each other."

"How silent you are, Madge! You have scarcely had a word to say for yourself all the evening," said Trix as the two sisters were putting on their bonnets preparatory to starting for home. "Are you thinking how nice it would be to be Mrs. Hugo Randolph, and have a husband worth four thousand eight hundred a year? Or have you fallen in love, by anticipation, with this sprightly young lawyer from the antipodes?"

"Headache, not heartache, is my complaint," said Margaret. "Besides, you can do chattering enough for both of us."

Hugh escorted the sisters as far as Irongate House. Trix and he had never been more gay and light-hearted than they were this evening. "Supposing Mr. Gudge had left his money to us, what should we have done with it?" they asked each other. Already they spoke of themselves familiarly as *we* and *us*. And then they laughingly discussed twenty different plans for getting through the money providing it were theirs, each plan more absurd than the former. Margaret's gloom was unnoticed by the happy lovers, and she was thankful to escape uncatechized.

Leaving Trix and Miss Easterbrook gossiping together, Margaret got away to her own room as quickly as possible. Above all things, just now, solitude was necessary to her. While in the society of others she felt that it was impossible for her to realise in all its dismal

reality how miserably her cherished scheme had failed. So she locked the door of her room, and sat down in a low chair by the window, sat down in the dark, and pressed her hands to her head, which now ached wearily, and tried to think. But all her thoughts, for this night at least, ran in one narrow groove, from which she found it impossible to dissociate them. The letter which she had so criminally stolen—yes, stolen, for in this hour of her humiliation she no longer strove to cozen her conscience as she had done many a time before—this letter had never been intended for Hugh Randolph, and her sacrifice had been utterly in vain. She had degraded and sullied herself for ever in her own eyes, and this was the result.

"How easy it were to imagine the finger of some juggling fiend as being mixed up in this business," thought Margaret; a fiend who knew my weakness, and flashed this one particular bait before my eyes, and sniggered to himself when he saw how easily I seized it. It is just the sort of trick that a Mephistopheles would revel in. What a wretched, guilty creature I am! How low must I have fallen, since, even at such a moment as this, I feel myself regretting the failure of my crime far more than the crime itself! Am I, can I be the same Margaret Davenant who slept in this room but four short months ago, slept with an anxious heart maybe, but with a conscience whose voice never haunted my dreams? No, I am not the same, for now my soul is tainted with moral leprosy; and the Great Healer seems to have withdrawn Himself for ever from my eyes: and I, alas! am afraid to go in search of Him."

She sighed heavily, and rose from her seat, and pressed her hot forehead against the cool panes.

"Poor Trix!" she murmured; "after all my scheming, she will be nothing more than the wife of a country surgeon. What I read of that fatal letter told me that Hugh Randolph was going to be a rich man; and I liked him so well, that I must needs try and win him as a husband for my darling. I was determined, at every risk, to save her from the drudgery that has weighed so heavily on my own life, and I thought to secure for her a husband at once both good and wealthy. I think if that temptation had not come so suddenly upon me, if time had been given me to weigh the chances for and against, that I should never have taken the letter, but have trusted to Hugh's falling in love with Trix, even after he should have learned how rich he was; for I knew that he was fond of her, although he had only seen her once, for a little while in Paris. But then, the temptation was so sudden, and had to be acted on in a moment if at all; and in that moment I saw, as in a vision, my own blighted love-dream (for I had a lover as long as I was rich, but lost him the day I became poor); and it seemed to me that Hugh Randolph poor and Hugh Randolph rich might be two very different people, and that if he heard of his good fortune before he had an opportunity of making love to Trix, my

darling might lose both husband and money. Perhaps I wronged Hugh Randolph by thinking thus meanly of him; I hope I did; but my experience of the world has been a hard one, and that must be my excuse. And so—and so—the letter was taken. Would to Heaven that I had never seen it!"

She crossed the room to the little ebony casket, unlocked it, and took out the letter. For a moment or two she looked at it curiously, and then she put it back in its hiding-place. "I will not destroy it even now," she said. "Lie there! and in years to come, should I ever be wanting in charity towards others, be thou as a monitor to remind me what a poor weak guilty creature I myself was once upon a time!"

(*To be continued.*)

MY LADY'S GARDEN.

WHERE clove-carnations scent the air,
And jasmine clusters overhead,
And sweet-pea blossoms nod and stare
Above the thyme box-bordered bed;
Where marigolds burst forth full-blown,
My pensive Lady droops alone.

Where stout determined hollyhocks
Climb, bud by bud, to loftier pride,
And where the homely buxom phlox
Flings her strange incense far and wide;
Where mouthing, fat snapdragons start,
My pensive Lady droops apart.

Where one majestic cedar throws
His shadow o'er the shaven sward,
And where the regal sunflower glows,
And lily-sweets are richly poured;
Where cherry-pie with old man vies,
My pensive Lady sadly sighs.

But lo, upon the western breeze
A tender signal-note is borne!
It pierces through the orchard trees
And leaps the field of waving corn!
And now, beside the garden gate,
My pensive Lady stands to wait.

And there, where comely asters grow,
And monk's-hood frowns, and pansies grin,
Where gay nasturtiums flame and glow,
Approaches one—and enters in.
And then, in that fair garden scene,
My pensive Lady smiles serene.

FAYR MADOC.

MY NEXT-DOOR NEIGHBOUR.

By the Author of "The Story of a Marriage."

SOME years ago it was my doleful hap to spend five months as a patient in one of our London hospitals. They were the dreariest months in the year, from November to February, when the great city is shorn of its summer attractions, and rain, fog and frost alternately strive for the supremacy, so that I did not lose many out-door pleasures owing to my illness. My life had been an up-and-down-hill journey, full of varied experiences. I had travelled much and seen many peoples and countries; I had had wealth and squandered it, and now at length poverty and I were fairly face to face. I had only myself to thank for my reverse of fortune, and I could not complain of the result of my own actions. The boon companions who helped me to spend my money forsook me at the approach of adversity, as midges that dance in the sunshine disappear when the sky is overcast.

I could not help admiring the symmetry and completeness of my misfortunes. Penniless, friendless, and for the first time in my life, at thirty-five years of age, fallen seriously ill. Health, without which I could do nothing and be nothing, was withdrawn precisely at the time when it was the one thing needful to enable me to retrieve my position. I had wealthy relations, but as I had not cared to know them in my prosperity I had no claim on them in my adversity, nor any desire to imitate the return of the Prodigal Son on the baseless presumption that a fatted calf would be killed for me. I remember it struck me as odd, when the doctor who visited me in my cheap lodgings gave me an in-patient's ticket for the hospital, whose pleasant lot it had been hitherto to bestow, instead of receive, favours. But there was no flavour of private charity in the proffered aid, and I accepted it as coming from that great impersonal body, the public, towards whom no one ever felt a burdensome sense of obligation.

The principle on which I had always chosen my friends probably made it easier than it would have been to most men of my education to pass twenty weeks on amicable terms with the very mixed specimens of humanity that passed through the hospital ward as my fellow-patients. If a man pleased and interested me, that was his letter of recommendation, and I enjoyed his society regardless of social distinctions. I thought no more of him if he happened to be a duke, or less if he chanced to be a cabman.

Many were the changes I saw during my long stay. Some of our number died, but most recovered and went away, while I remained till the population of the beds had changed repeatedly, and I grew to

be the oldest inhabitant and father of the house. The ward was a long narrow room with folding doors at each end, a large fireplace in the middle with four high windows at either side, six beds under each row of windows and twelve beds along the opposite side of the room, making twenty-four in all. The walls were stained a cheerful blue, and hung with engravings of more or less merit and garnished here and there with texts and mottoes inciting us to be very joyful, or, where that was not possible, to try resignation as a useful workaday substitute. The floor was of polished wood, unrelieved by carpet or rug. The windows opened easily by an arrangement of ropes and pulleys, and ventilators close under the ceiling at the opposite side of the ward ensured a thorough current of air when it was necessary to change the atmosphere. But nothing can prevent the peculiar flatness of hospital air. I never lost the consciousness of it, while the smell of carbolic filled me with loathing. It is supposed to overpower other and so-called worse odours than itself; but to me it seemed a substituting of one evil for another.

The illness that kept me so long in the hospital was a surgical case of great interest to the doctors and considerable suffering to myself, but gratifying to my invalid's egotism because it was the only case of the kind in the ward, where nine diseases were apportioned among twenty-four patients. To have one all to oneself out of that limited number conferred a certain distinction upon one.

An Anglican sisterhood was in charge of the nursing at the hospital, and splendidly they performed their duties; I think of them still with respect and gratitude. The nurses were strong, capable women, for the most part wonderfully forbearing with ill-tempered and thankless patients. During the time I spent under their care I gained some insight into the trials and difficulties of a hospital nurse's life. I came to the conclusion that, if I were a woman, I would do or be anything that was honest, except stewardess on board ship, rather than nurse sick people for a livelihood.

It is a marvel to me how anyone used to quiet and privacy in his own home when he is ill ever recovers in a hospital, where he has neither one nor the other. But I had such a splendid nervous system that it was only on days of prostration following an operation that I really suffered from living in public, and then I did so acutely. In spite of the screen put round my bed to form a make-believe room to myself, in imagination I still saw the seven faces on the pillows to my right hand and four to my left in the long row of beds; I heard every groan, every impatient exclamation of the weary sufferers, and at night I listened with a frightfully exalted sense of hearing to the long-drawn snores of such of them as were happy enough to be able to sleep. The crowd of medical students, who accompanied and thronged about the doctors when they made the round of the wards, was in itself enough to kill a sensitive and nervous patient. They clustered like bees round any especially

interesting case, and the more hideous the sights they saw, or the details they listened to, the happier they were and the more notes they took. I looked at the dignified bearing and fine face of the celebrated operating surgeon to whom they were listening by a patient's bedside, and wondered could he ever have been an uncouth lad like so many of his pupils. Could those penetrating eyes, full of the fire of genius, ever have winked at a fellow-student behind the back of the great doctor of the day some forty years ago?

I soon became interested in the routine of hospital life, and on those days when I was fairly well and free from pain I should never wish to be better entertained than I was in studying my fellow-patients.

We were a motley crew, surely the oddest four-and-twenty men that circumstances could have thrown together. The changes in our population were so rapid that a bed had scarcely time to grow cold before it was in possession of a fresh occupant. We were of all ages, shapes and sizes, and of a variety of nationalities; being, I think, at our most representative when our company consisted of Englishmen, Irishmen, Scotchmen, with a choleric little Welshman, Germans, a Yankee, a Frenchman, a Swede, a Lascar seaman, a Jew and a Negro. By chance the Yankee on the day of his arrival was put in the next bed to the Negro; but after much nasal vituperation, the arrangement was altered for peace and quiet's sake. We represented many trades as well as nationalities, and had amongst us tailors, policemen, costermongers, postmen, a butler, cabmen, a grave digger, a sugar refiner, shoemakers, and an omnibus conductor.

We also had some of those mysterious gentlemen of no particular calling or visible means of sustenance, who live at the back of everywhere, for a crowd or an accident brings them into the street in swarms, as heavy rain brings worms to the surface of the soil. They are always open to an odd job, when it is highly paid for and not of an arduous nature. They spend their Sunday afternoons demonstrating in the park, clothed in long top coats and woollen comforters, and never without a short pipe and tobacco, which presumably costs money. Where they sleep at night when they are not in hospital I have no idea. One of our company, who afforded me much amusement, was a genteel and sensitive young clerk, who had it much on his mind to explain to me how he came to be in such a vulgar institution as a public hospital. He was consumed by a haunting dread lest, when he had recovered and returned to his place in the office of Messrs. Scrawley and McNib in Lincoln's Inn, he might be recognised in the street and spoken to by one of his fellow-patients, a chimney-sweep of too friendly a disposition. "His face, sir, would be black in the pursuit of his avocation and I shouldn't know him, but he'd see me a mile off and run after me; and if a man in my position is seen talking to a sweep I shall be ruined," said my sensitive little clerk.

I made a great variety of friends among my fellow-patients who stayed long enough to feel some interest in others, as the terrible egotism of their own sufferings abated. I parted on excellent terms with a butler, who taught me the kind of whistle I must give at the area gate when I called to see him after nightfall. A hansom-driver, bidding me good-bye, in the fulness of his heart offered to take me in his cab down Piccadilly for my first airing after I left the hospital. A thoughtful little German baker with whom I talked metaphysics in accordance with the definition, that, "when a man talks to you in a way that you don't understand, about a thing which he doesn't understand, them's metaphysics," as a parting gift presented me with a list of shops whose bread one would do well to avoid, from the baker's custom of working the sponge with unwashen hands, and I thanked him. A costermonger acquaintance taught me how, when buying fruit off a barrow in the street, to detect the tricks of the trade. In short I picked up a great deal of information that, if it was not useful, amused me and afforded me a glimpse into the lives of other men.

I had been three months in bed, and was recovering from the effects of an operation, when I became acquainted with a man who interested me more than any other of my fellow-patients.

I remember the day that he came into the hospital. It was in the first week of the new year, and a nurse had congratulated me on the good luck of having had the bed to the right of mine standing empty for two whole days. Its last occupant had been a dull, heavy fellow, absorbed in the contemplation of his own symptoms and doggedly convinced that he was the head martyr in the universe, unable perhaps, and certainly unwilling, to take part in the courtesies and amenities of invalid life. We did not miss him when he left, and the blank pillow was a pleasanter object to look at than the furrowed, irritable face and bald head that had lain upon it. It occurred to me, how fortunate I should be if the fates should send me an intelligent, sympathetic fellow-sufferer in the bed that I had seen so diversely occupied during the past twelve weeks.

The previous night my rest had been troubled, and in the forenoon, between the disturbance of the doctors' visit and dinner being brought to us, I fell asleep. When I awoke I was astonished to find the bed that an hour and a half before had been empty occupied by a fresh patient, looking as comfortable and established as though he had been there a week.

The new comer was a tall, swarthy-complexioned man of about thirty years of age. He lay on his back with his eyes closed and his head inclined towards me, so that I had a good view of his very remarkable face. That he was not an Englishman I felt sure, though to what country he belonged I could not tell. He was clean-shaven as I thought, but I afterwards found that no hair grew on his face, and a month without a razor did not darken his lip or chin. His skin was of a yellowish-brown, and his straight black hair that

covered his ears and lay on his cheek was cut square across his forehead. The nose was large and prominent, the mouth large, thin-lipped and well-shaped, and the jaw formed a powerful angle from the ear. The length of the face from the eyes to the mouth was greater than is usual, and the finely-modelled long hollow of the cheek gave a melancholy and dignified outline to his countenance. I wondered what he would be like when he awoke, and as I watched he opened his dark eyes, large and set wide apart, with a clear and penetrating expression.

As I looked in his face, that in spite of its smoothness was essentially masculine, and in expression a quaint mixture of shrewdness and childlike simplicity, I said to myself, "My friend, I cannot off-hand assign you to any particular country, but I can date your type of face for you: you have no business at all wandering about in the nineteenth century; you ought never to have stirred from the fourteenth, nor emerged from the pages of Froissart, to which you really belong."

There was a quiet dignity about the man that forbade me to ask the usual questions that inaugurate a hospital acquaintance, such as, "What's your name? where do you come from? and what's the matter with you?" and I waited my time for a favourable opportunity of speaking to him.

When the nurse gave me my dinner I asked her, "Who is the man in the next bed?"

"A Frenchman; he was brought here while you were asleep."

"Good," thought I; "then I shall amuse myself by rubbing up my rusty French with him. Can you tell me his name?"

"No, I can't remember French names, and besides, he has a string of them, those foreigners always have."

I reached paper and pencil from the locker by my side and gave them to the nurse. "Just oblige me by copying his name from the card over his bed and bring it to me, will you?" She did as she was requested, and returning handed me the paper, on which she had written the names, Jean Marie Thégonnec Pipriac. "Why, the man must be a Breton," said I, repeating the two last names to myself.

"A Briton! A Frenchman never yet was a Briton, and couldn't be if he tried," said the nurse promptly, her national susceptibilities rubbed the wrong way in an instant through her misapprehension.

"A Breton, my good woman, a Breton, not a Briton," said I; "and a Breton is no more a Frenchman, though he may happen to speak French, than a Welshman is an Englishman, even if he talks English. When did that solemn, dignified, fourteenth-century face ever belong to a Frenchman I should like to know?" and I wished to argue with my nurse concerning racial differences, but she cut the matter short by turning to the new patient and asking him plainly whether he was a Frenchman or what, for an Englishman in the

next bed would not take her word for it. Our stranger, who was sitting up with his table across his knees, waiting for dinner, bowed gravely, first to the nurse and then to me.

"I am a Breton, madame, and I come from Roscoff, in the department of Finistère," he said in a low, melancholy voice, speaking with a strong foreign accent; and, he added with dignified simplicity: "My name is Jean Marie Thégonnec Pipriac, but I am everywhere called Jean Marie."

"I thought you a Breton from your name," I said. "I know your part of Brittany very well. I used to know Finistère and Morbihan from end to end; I once spent a summer there."

"Does monsieur know Bretagne?" said my new acquaintance, with flashing eyes. "Has he been to Morlaix, Landenau, Quimper, S. Pol de Léon, Carnac, Plougastel?" and then followed a torrent of names of places, some on the coast and some inland, just as they rushed into his mind.

"I know them all, my friend," I said, smiling at his eagerness, "and when you have eaten your dinner you shall ask me as many questions as you please, and see if I speak the truth."

"I should not doubt that monsieur spoke the truth, but it is wonderful; it is wonderful!"

I noticed that Jean Marie, as I already called him to myself, devoutly crossed himself on the forehead and on the breast, before and after he took food. I tried to talk French with him, though not always with lucid results, for he had learned French as a second language, and spoke a strange patois, while mine, such as it was, had been acquired in Paris.

An acquaintance sprang up rapidly between us, founded on my knowledge of the scenes of his childhood, and the places dearest to him in his manhood; and I grew fond of Jean Marie, so that my heart sank when I learnt how badly the doctors thought of his case. By degrees he told me the simple story of his life.

Jean Marie Thégonnec Pipriac was the son of a poor fisherman and his wife who lived near Roscoff, on the coast of Finistère. He and his younger sister, Anne—namesake of La Bonne Duchesse, who after four centuries is still spoken of in Brittany as though she had been dead but a generation or so—were the only children, and had been brought up in such poverty and hard work as sounded incredible to my pampered English ears. They never tasted meat. Their food was the coarsest bread, with onions and potatoes, and occasionally on festival days a little fish and milk. They rose at four in the morning to make or mend fishing-nets, or to work on the small plot of ground surrounding the hut in which they lived. The father was out fishing every night, and the mother burnt a taper in the window that in calm weather he could see as a glimmering point of light, when his boat was tossing on the water far from the shore. When he came safely home out of the teeth of the western gales that ravage

that coast, the pious mother took her children to the church, to thank the Blessed Virgin for her protection. Once when the husband and father had been miraculously preserved in a storm, they made a votive offering of a model of a fishing boat, which was hung suspended from the roof of the chancel before the altar of their patron saint, in visible token of the mercy of Heaven and the gratitude of man.

But there came a fearful night in autumn when a sudden squall of wind struck the little fleet of fishing boats, and in the dismal dawn, when stormy sea and sky seemed torn together in one grey mist, out of the welter of devouring waves, the drowned bodies of brave fishermen were washed ashore, and among them that of Thégonnec Pipriac, the father of Jean Marie.

"The sea is cruel on the coast of Finistère, monsieur; it makes many widows and orphans; and on winter nights we hear it howling like a hungry wolf at our door. But in the summer it is often still and blue as the sky above, and the little islands are like clouds floating on its surface. In the summer, monsieur, the sea is like the love of the Bon Dieu; in the winter it is like his wrath, and we tremble before it."

Jean Marie was to have been a fisherman, like his father before him, but the mother, dreading lest the cruel sea should take from her her son as well as her husband, moved a short distance to S. Pol de Léon, where she found work for herself and little Anne in the fields. Jean-Marie, only ten years old, worked his twelve hours daily as a farm labourer for a trifling pittance; but, as he said, "the Bon Dieu saw that I wanted for nothing. I had bread; I had health and strength, and as I grew older I was able to succour my mother and my sister."

Jean Marie saw the Bon Dieu in everything. I have never met man or woman with the same childlike faith.

When he was twenty years of age his mother died, worn out with toil and scanty living. Work as they would, the three of them, they could not earn more than enough to meet each day's recurring want; they could not lay by a sou against sickness or accident, or afford the weary mother a little rest before she died. Shortly after her death her daughter married a fisherman and went to live on the island of Batzoff, the soil of which is tilled by the women, while the men plough the sea, and there she still lives in many-childed poverty.

"How come you to speak English, Jean-Marie?" I asked him one day when he was free from pain and able to enjoy conversation.

"Monsieur, I learnt it from an excellent compatriot of yours, who lived for many years at Carnac, trying to find out the meaning of the great stones there. Monsieur Smitt was like a father to me. I was his servant, I dug his garden and tended his horse and cow, and he taught me to speak his difficult language. For several years I lived with my master. He was not Catholic, monsieur; Père Croisac would have it that he was not even Christian, but the Bon Dieu had given

him a good heart, and the poor prayed for him. I tried to convert my master, and I assured him of the miracles that the holy saints still work in Bretagne. But Monsieur Smitt would not be convinced. He had a way like so many Englishmen—pardon me, monsieur, but it is not a good way—of jesting at holy things. But in his heart I think my master believed, for he let me go all the way to Helgoet when our cow had cast her calf, and was suffering like a Christian, to intercede with Saint Herbot for the poor beast."

"I remember Saint Herbot's church perfectly well," I said. "He has taken the cattle under his special protection, and I saw tufts of the hair of sick animals laid on his altar by their unfortunate owners, who had come to pray for their recovery."

"Then monsieur must have seen the very wisp of hair from our poor cow's tail that I laid on the altar of the holy saint myself," said Jean Marie with animation. "It was red, with here and there a white hair mixed; monsieur could not forget it."

I was obliged to evade the difficulty by saying that when I visited Saint Herbot's church, the altar was so thickly covered with tufts of goats', horses', and cows' hair that Jean Marie's lock must have been hidden beneath them.

"And did the cow recover?" I asked.

"Monsieur, when I returned from my pilgrimage on the third day the poor beast was dead."

"What, when you had walked two whole days to lay a tuft of her hair before Saint Herbot? What could the saint be dreaming of?"

"Monsieur, the Holy Saint Herbot has two ways of answering prayer for les pauvres bestiaux malades. If he judges it best for them to recover, they will get better; but if not, they will die," and as though unwilling further to discuss the saint with an unbeliever, Jean Marie passed on to other reminiscences.

"When I was twenty-five years of age my master took me with him to Paris; the first time that I had left my native Bretagne. But, monsieur, what a thing it was, the people there treated me as if I was a savage. They laughed at me in the street, at my long hair, my wide hat, my excellent bragous bras—breeches is your English word for them, monsieur—of the pattern that my forefathers had worn since the days of La Bonne Duchesse. They jeered at me when I went to mass, and their churches were empty; in Bretagne they are crowded with men. My money was stolen from me, and when I politely asked my way in the street I was directed to the wrong place. The very children used vile words, and the young girls said things to me that a man in Bretagne would blush to think of.

One day when we had grown quite intimate, Jean Marie confided to me the love he had borne to his fellow servant Françoise.

"Monsieur, I have never loved but one woman, my Françoise. For five years we eat at the same table, we worked in the same garden, we went to mass together, we prayed together. We were not

married because I desired to save a little money first, that my wife might not have to toil as my poor mother had done. Monsieur, I cannot tell you whether my Françoise was beautiful or not, but the Bon Dieu had given her to me, and I never looked in another woman's face. We were to be married: Monsieur Smitt would still keep me as his servant, and we were to live in a little cottage near him, and he would have another woman for his cook, though my Françoise was still to help in the housework. Within a fortnight of our intended marriage our good master fell ill of a fever, and my Françoise nursed him, and took it from him and died. They both died, monsieur, my master and my Françoise, and I tried to take the fever from them that I might die too, but the fever had no more power to kill me than fire has to burn the holy saints. And to think, monsieur, that we might have been man and wife if I had not loved my Françoise so well. Monsieur, this rosary is all that I have that belonged to my Françoise, for she was as poor as the Blessed Virgin herself."

And Jean Marie stretched his long, thin arm towards me, and laid on the locker by my bedside a cheap rosary, made of a string of small berries, with a crucifix attached to it.

After the death of his master and Françoise, Jean Marie returned to the neighbourhood of Roscoff and worked under a well-to-do farmer, who grew great quantities of the onions for which that part of Finistère is renowned. He was an enterprising man, and anxious to find the best market for his produce. Jean Marie served him faithfully and intelligently, and when he had been with him three years he increased his wages, and as he spoke English he sent him to London, to negotiate for the sale of his onions with English dealers. I was astounded to find how astute my fourteenth-century friend was in business matters. He had made bargains profitable to his employer and to himself, and Monsieur Ploumel was highly satisfied with the honesty and ability of his agent.

And now, on his third journey to England, Jean Marie was smitten with a mortal illness and would never return to his native land.

"I have been ill for more than a year, monsieur. I know it by the pain I have suffered. But it does not matter; it is over now. I have finished my work. The day before I came into this hospital I sent to Monsieur Ploumel every sou I had made for him, and a draft for three hundred francs that I had saved for my poor sister and her children. I have come here to die," he said, in quiet unemotional tones, as though he were speaking of a stranger.

I listened in silence, for I knew what the doctors thought of his case: that nothing could be done to cure, but only to palliate the disease. Never had there been a more patient sufferer in the hospital. In spite of his mediæval superstition, Jean Marie was a most courageous Christian, and put us all to shame. When he was sufficiently free from pain to speak, it was with a gentle courtesy, and no word of complaint or of impatience ever escaped his lips. He was always

ready to listen to the egotistic grumbling of his fellow-patients, though he tried, by example and precept, to lift us out of the narrow groove of self-centred suffering.

One day I saw that he was enduring agony. His dark face was livid, and when he could speak he said quietly, "Monsieur, these pains are pinpricks compared with those the Blessed Redeemer suffered for us."

That night Jean Marie was very ill, and I lay awake, partly from sympathy with him, partly because his restlessness made it difficult for me to sleep, as he muttered and talked to himself without ceasing. The nurse was in constant attendance upon him, and she said to me: "His sleeping draught has not suited him to-night; he is terribly restless."

Between two and three o'clock in the morning I thought that she was again leaning over Jean Marie. On the opposite side of his bed, facing me, a woman stood wearing a white cap, but not such as our nurses wore, and she was bending over Jean Marie as though she would kiss him. Then she knelt, holding his hand in hers, and the light in the ward was sufficient for me to see that she wore the costume of a Brittany peasant, with the coloured cotton kerchief on the shoulders, tucked into the bib of the black apron in front. I raised myself in bed, and a nurse, who was sitting by the fire, came to me at once.

"Do you want anything?" she asked.

"Yes; who is that woman?" and I pointed to the figure still standing by Jean Marie.

"What woman?" she said, looking in the direction I indicated.

"That Brittany peasant woman to be sure, by Jean Marie's bedside, talking to him and holding his hand."

"You have been dreaming!" said the nurse; "there is no one there. Lie down and try to go to sleep, though I daresay that poor fellow makes it hard for you to rest."

I had not been dreaming, though Jean Marie had, for afterwards he awoke with a little sigh as if he were sorry to return to consciousness, and said in his quiet tones, "Monsieur, the Bon Dieu has been very good to me. He has sent my Françoise to me in a dream, and I have seen her and held her hand in mine. I am only to suffer three days more, for on Sunday morning at two o'clock my Françoise is to fetch me," and he laughed to himself, a little laugh of incomparable happiness, and soon afterwards became again delirious.

All Thursday, Friday and Saturday my friend grew steadily worse, though the doctors did not anticipate an immediate end of his sufferings. His mind wandered the whole time, and he talked to himself incessantly in Breton. When occasionally he dropt into French and I understood what he said, he was imagining that he was a child again, playing on the sands, or sitting on the rocks with his little sister, mending their father's fishing nets. I grew feverish with

excitement and anticipation of what would happen to Jean Marie. I had certainly seen his Françoise, and I dreaded her return, but I did not dare confide in either doctor or nurse; my strange experience could only be regarded by them as a sick man's fancy. But my state of nervous excitement was duly noticed and commented on by one of the house surgeons, a pleasant young man who had shown me much kindness.

"What in the world are you exciting yourself about?" he asked me on the Saturday afternoon. "You haven't had a pulse like this since before your first operation, and you've nothing of the kind in anticipation to account for it now."

But I could not tell him the truth, because from me it would appear incredible. I said that I had slept badly for several nights past, and that might account for my not being so well as usual, and I wound up with the apparently inconsequent request, "Do come and see Jean Marie at two o'clock in the morning, doctor."

I spoke so earnestly that the surgeon ceased tapping the palm of his left hand with the stethoscope he held in his right, and said: "I shall be in the ward at four o'clock under any circumstances, so that unless you have any very good reasons for asking me to see him earlier, your request is absurd. If I could do the poor fellow any good by seeing him then it would be another thing. And I'm almost run off my legs as it is."

"But I have a perfectly valid reason for asking you to see Jean Marie precisely at that hour," I urged. "I cannot tell you now what it is, but I will do so afterwards, if you will only come," and he felt my pulse again, and I knew that he thought I was wandering in my mind.

"Well, well," he said, good humouredly, "if I can wake myself at that hour—two o'clock I think you said—I'll run in and have a look at Jean Marie."

About eleven o'clock, when the lights were turned low and all was quiet for the night, Jean Marie's mind for a short time became clear and tranquil. He was like a man about to set forth on a delightful journey to some place and friends he longed to see; he was full of deep, happy excitement. When the nurse asked him if he wanted anything his answer was always the same, "Mon ami, my wanting days are over; I have everything." Then he spoke to me. "I am ready to go when my Françoise fetches me. Monsieur, if I may leave to you my rosary I shall be glad; it may be that the Bon Dieu will lead you by it to become Catholic," and he looked wistfully.

"Jean Marie, I would become anything that would give me your peace and courage," I said. But I do not think that he heard my reply, for he was again wandering—talking to himself and singing snatches of old Breton songs, that were not unlike Gregorian tones.

"I wish that French fellow would be quiet and let me go to sleep," whimpered a fretful voice from my left-hand neighbour.

"It is the last night that he will disturb you; have a little patience," I said.

Midnight had long past and in due course I heard the church clocks for a mile round strike one, like irregular file firing; I had not long to wait before I should know whether Jean Marie's prophetic dream was true or not. In the exalted state of my senses every sound in the ward, every footfall of the nurses, seemed unnaturally loud, as I lay watching in the subdued light the old-world features of Jean Marie. He was lying on his back with closed eyes, his long, brown fingers telling his beads and his lips moving rapidly. Just then a nurse approached his bedside with a dose of medicine so nauseous that the smell of it as it wafted by made me feel ill.

"Must you disturb him to give him that vile stuff?" I asked as I looked with compassion on Jean Marie, tranquil for the first time in many hours. "Doctor's orders," she replied briefly, and raised the patient's head to put the glass to his lips. He opened his eyes, and I saw by his expression that his soul revolted at the loathsome draught; then, with the meekness of a little child, he drained it to the dregs.

It was a few minutes to two o'clock and I was strung up to an almost intolerable pitch of excitement. When a cinder fell from the grate it sounded like thunder, and I started and trembled. Jean Marie had fallen into a restless sleep, but he no longer muttered and talked to himself. I could hardly believe my eyes, though I firmly expected what I saw—by the side of Jean Marie's bed stood the same form I had seen three nights ago, the Brittany peasant woman. Her plain, swarthy face was covered with the sweetest smiles and she leaned her dark head in its snowy cap over Jean Marie till her cheek almost touched his. My heart beat almost to suffocation, and I leaned upon my elbow, determined to watch closely. It was seldom that everyone was asleep in the ward at the same time, and the sister in charge and the nurses were certainly awake; did no one but myself see the tall figure by Jean Marie's bed? It must have been full ten minutes that I saw the woman both standing and leaning over him in her quaint dress, and at length she knelt by his side and I heard him say in a low voice of ecstasy, "Oh, ma Françoise! ma Françoise!" as he sighed away his last breath.

"Nurse, nurse," I cried, "Jean Marie is dying!" and she hastened to him in a moment, as she did so unconsciously passing through the shadowy form that still hovered over him. Just then the door at the end of the ward opened and the house surgeon entered.

"What is the matter?" he said as he saw me out of bed and the nurse feeling Jean Marie's pulse.

"Jean Marie is dead very suddenly; I only gave him his draught half-an-hour ago," said the nurse. Then I told the doctor as collectedly as I could what I had seen on Thursday night and how

Jean Marie had told me of his dream, which I had seen fulfilled, and of the ghostly figure of the Breton peasant woman that had but that moment faded from my sight. I dared not tell him the night before, but now that there was confirmation of it he must see for himself that it was true, and I pointed to poor Jean Marie's corpse. He listened with the greatest attention.

"If it had been any other patient that had told me such a thing," he said at length, "I should have known that he was delirious and have ordered ice to his head, and I don't say but that it might be a good thing for even you. Still, when an educated man like yourself is convinced that he has been brought face to face with the supernatural he is entitled to a hearing. It is strange, very strange. Jean Marie was a remarkable man; I have never met a patient like him. There is only one thing that I can be sure of in the whole affair, and that is, that I must have you out of this ward the first thing in the morning, or your nerves will be shattered in addition to your other troubles."

The body of my poor friend was removed before any of the patients were aware that a death had occurred. In a few hours I found myself in another ward of the hospital, surrounded by fresh faces, and I could hardly be certain whether or not I had dreamed the strange story of Jean Marie Thégonnec Pipriac.

IN A LONDON SQUARE.

Belovëd city, whence thy potent charm
To call the wanderer back? Thy dome, above
Whose summit shines the cross, where lights the dove,
Holding dear ashes in its sheltering arm
Of happy warriors, safe from war's alarm?
Or thy fair fane, bidding the fancy rove
From fretted fanwork down through marble grove?
Not these remembered make my heart grow warm;
Not towers of Parliament, or hall of Steven.
But, shut with iron gates, a quiet square,
Green-turfed, tree-shaded, still, where all arow
The tall, pale virgins of the garden grow,
Where I, with easeful book or friend may share
The peace of lilies in the hush of even.

Marion Meteyard.

IN THE LOTUS LAND.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "Letters from Majorca," "The Bretons at Home," etc. etc.

Sphinx from the Serapeum.

IT is impossible to visit Egypt without being at once confronted with the subject and science of Hieroglyphics. Without them the Lotus Land would lose one of her most prominent and most interesting features. They are as much a part of herself as her ancient religion, her Dynasties and modes of government, her Art and Architecture: as inseparable from her in idea as the very Nile itself.

The study of Hieroglyphics is one of the first and most absorbing in connection with Ancient Egypt. Her temples, her tombs, her ruined towns would lose much of their charm if it were not for the dead language which decorates their walls. And many of these same walls would present an enormous and monotonous surface, a baldness and severity of outline, without their hieroglyphic decorations, which existed for unknown ages before the Christian era, and now place before us the most ancient manner of writing of the most ancient people we know to have existed. Hieroglyphics are not the less interesting that for long they were a sealed book, an unknown tongue to the modern world. Egyptologists had vainly endeavoured to find a key to the enigma; it baffled and eluded the deepest and closest research; one after another gave it up in despair; apparently the secret had died with the ancients and was shrouded in the most profound mystery and the most remote antiquity. Neither living nor dead language had the slightest thing in common with hieroglyphics, or could in the least degree help students on the road to their interpretation. Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Arabic—nothing assisted them; their labour seemed in vain.

Then came the discovery of the Rosetta Stone by the French, in 1798; a stone which the English took possession of at the evacuation of Egypt in 1801, and which may now be seen in the British Museum: one of the most useful and interesting relics in the whole world.

The merit of this stone consisted in its inscription being in three

languages; in Hieroglyphic characters, Demotic and Greek; and by comparing one with another, the long-lost secret, the long-sought clue, was discovered. Dr. Young was the first to trace this clue; to him therefore the greatest honour, but he did not live long enough to perfect what he had commenced. His labours were continued by Champollion, who, working upon Young's lines, made immense strides in the study and its interpretation, and has received nearly all the honour and glory which in part belonged to Dr. Young. Yet Champollion could afford to give honour where it was due, for his own work in this abstruse matter was sufficient to satisfy any man's ambition. But Champollion also died a young man, in 1832, and he also left his work unfinished. He had so far advanced, however, that those who came after him had a comparatively easy task before them. Comparatively only; for even now much remains to be discovered. It is probable that in the next few years the whole science of hieroglyphics—their whole meaning and interpretation—will be perfected; and the world will owe much to those learned and devoted men who have given up their lives to the study of this most interesting but abstruse and apparently hopeless and incomprehensible matter. It has been one of the greatest triumphs of perseverance in difficulties that the world has seen; an achievement to be more proud of than the conquered worlds of an Alexander the Great, the world-influence of a Julius Cæsar, or the victories of a Napoleon. For without them very much of the history of Ancient Egypt would never have been known.

One reason for its lengthened obscurity is that Egyptologists took for the foundation of their study and research the oldest book existing upon the subject; a work by the Egyptian grammarian, Horapollon, which had been translated into Greek. Horapollon, in his work, declares that all the characters represented are only symbolical, each having an independent meaning of its own. In this he was wrong, and all students of later days, working upon this key, obtained no result and made no progress. Fortunately, the discovery of the Rosetta Stone gave a new aspect to the matter and brought out the meaning of these mystic signs. The veil separating our own times from the days of the Ancients was raised. But as yet it was only as the faint light of knowledge breaking in the East; the dawn of great discoveries that had yet to come; ingenuity and research and devoted labour and the patience of genius had to be exercised through long years, before the mystery was a mystery no longer.

The word hieroglyphics was given to these signs and symbols by the Greeks, and signifies literally, "Sacred Sculptures." It is not an Egyptian word, as those not learned in the dead languages might naturally suppose, and was never employed by the Egyptians themselves. But it has come into general use, and no better word, perhaps, could have been found for the occasion. It is, however, nothing but a modern title for an ancient science, and as such is incorrect.

The key to these hieroglyphics had been lost in the long past ages. The ancient Egyptians—that wonderful people—in dying, seemed to take the secret with them. They left behind them no guide or interpretation for future generations. They loved mystery, and a mystery their signs and symbols should remain; and those who came after apparently gave themselves no trouble about the matter. It needed, as it seemed, the lapse of many ages to make them sufficiently interesting to be worthy of research. Neither the Greeks nor Romans, who in turn conquered Egypt, took any step or gave themselves the slightest trouble to interpret the enigma, although in their day it might possibly have been more easily accomplished. They looked upon it as a secret mystery relating to religion, not as an historical record of the country. It was reserved for students of comparatively modern times to disturb the subject from its profound repose and throw light upon the hitherto impenetrable darkness of the past.

The ancient Egyptians had three kinds of writing, as far as we may trace back by the aid of history and research. What they possessed before those times is not known; but it is certain there was a people even long before the days of Menes, since it seems more than probable that Memphis was built upon the ruins of a yet more ancient city; and without doubt, that earlier people possessed some mode of expressing their thoughts in writing, even if their method was purely symbolical. They were not barbarians; for barbarians do not build themselves cities to dwell in. The mud hut or the bare plain is the savage's idea of a habitation. It is even quite possible that the people existing before the time of Menes possessed a higher degree of civilisation than did he or his. The history of the world shows that there is a downward as well as an upward progress, in civilisation as much as in prosperity.

These three different forms of writing were the Hieroglyphic, the Hieratic and the Demotic; to which, after the Christian era, was added the Coptic. The hieroglyphic writing was the earliest. It is found throughout Egypt: on public monuments; on the slabs of tombs, on the ruined walls of temples; on obelisks, of which a specimen may now be seen on the Thames embankment; and will be seen until the action of our insular atmosphere gradually wears away the stone and effaces the characters: a process already commenced. These characters abound, we say; they are found on objects used in the social life of the Egyptians; in historical records; they were employed in transcribing the mystic and mysterious doctrines of the Egyptian religion; and they set forth the deeds of the kings, handing down their fame, their glorious deeds to posterity. In the very earliest records we possess, these signs cease to be quite symbolic. Already the ancients had advanced a step beyond this; and these first records carry us back at least four thousand years before the Christian era. The language chiefly used in the hieroglyphic and hieratic writings was the sacred dialect of the priests. They alone possessed the key

GREAT HALL AT KARNAK.

necessary to interpretation; and perhaps this is one reason why the secret became so utterly lost in later times; it had never been universally known; never the property of the common people. To a large proportion of the Egyptians these signs and symbols were as profound a mystery as they were to the students of the last century.

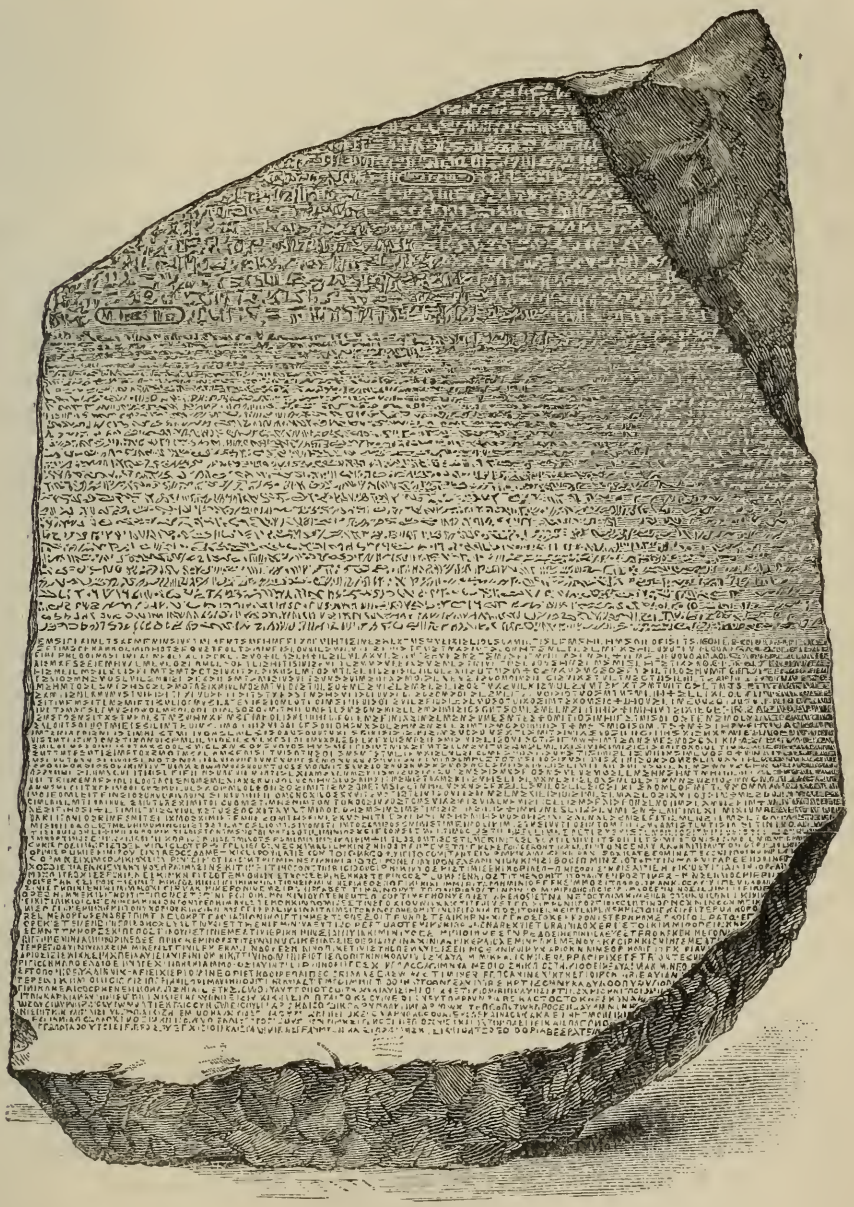
This hieroglyphic writing consisted of the representation of *figures* and *sounds:* the figures of material objects; all objects found in the realm of nature and of art, but especially birds. To these they added mathematical and arbitrary symbols. The whole formed a sufficiently grotesque representation. Their figures were mere outlines, with no grace of form, no elaboration of detail. The gift was not theirs, in the first place, and it would have taken too long to carve and elaborate if it had been. It is amazing that even so much was done, considering the hardness of their stone; the immense depth of much of their chiselling, the extraordinary care and pains it must have cost them; for such as their outlines and representations are, they are mathematically precise, never varying and never going astray.

The Demotic writing came into use only nine centuries before Christ: a comparatively modern epoch to the ages that had gone before. Yet the secret of this also became absolutely lost when its employers passed away. It differed very widely from the hieroglyphic, and looks more like a phonetic alphabet than a record of symbols. Lines and curves are largely brought into use, the outlines of natural objects are much less represented, until at length they almost disappear. The sacred dialect of the priests was no longer solely transcribed. This, indeed, in the course of time, became almost a distinct and separate language from that spoken by the people. It was to give expression to the popular language that the demotic writing came into use. But it was employed chiefly for social and business purposes, and was called the "letter character" by the Greeks: the records on public monuments still retaining much of their hieroglyphic tendency.

No doubt the hieroglyphic system began with very rude and crude signs, with the barest and roughest outlines; the completion to which it attained was a matter of long growth. How long we know not; the earliest records possessed do not differ very greatly from the latest. At first the ideas expressed are themselves mere outlines or suggestions; the simplest record of a fact; the reign of a certain king; a battle he fought; and so on; combined with sacred signs and allusions, which enter largely into the hieroglyphic dominion: a matter in no way surprising, considering the immense thought and importance given to religion by the ancient Egyptians, and also that the priest had chief power and control over the records.

Sometimes the writing was from right to left, sometimes left to right, sometimes, like the Chinese, it was written in columns for the sake of architectural convenience. The manner of the writing was

indicated by the position of the birds: a bird looking to the left signified that the writing was to be read from left to right, and vice versa: just as the arrow upon our clocks intimates which way the key is to be turned. But certain mystic writings of the twentieth



ROSETTA STONE.

Dynasty, such as the Tomb of Rameses at Thebes, are in retrograde, or contrary to the usual order of the signs: the tail of the bird and not the beak indicating how the inscription shall be read. No motive can be found for this departure from ordinary rules. In writing, the middle and final vowels were generally suppressed. The earliest forms were the best and simplest, perhaps because there was less to

be recorded, and they could give more care and attention to outlines. The oldest known sculptures yet discovered and identified are the statues of Ra-hotep and Nefert in the Boulak Museum, and here the letters are large, beautifully cut and easily deciphered. In the time of Rameses II.—that king who gained so much credit and deserved so little—the characters became smaller and closer; there was more to be said, and long use and facility in workmanship has a reducing tendency. Under the Ptolemies it grew stiff and conventional, lost all grace and beauty; was crowded; and is very much more difficult to interpret. Instead of being clear, open and bold, it is small, complicated and involved.

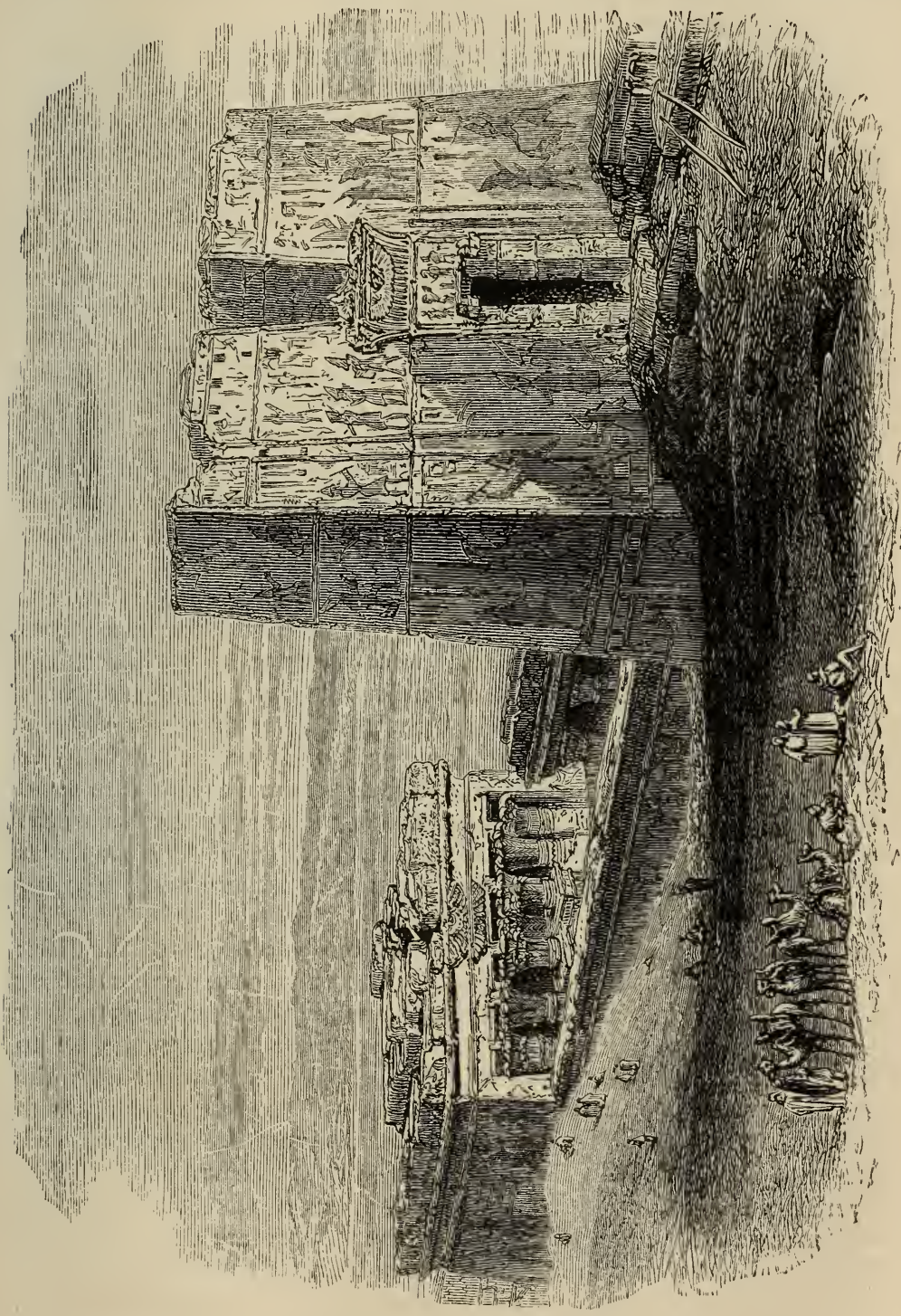
The number of signs employed in hieroglyphics is about three thousand. The two systems: the Ideographic and the Phonetic, were intimately connected; the former using objects to express their meaning, the latter expressing words by symbols of their sounds, as far as they could be given. The ingenuity employed was remarkable, and it must have taken immense time, thought and practice to bring the system to perfection.

The endeavour to express sounds came first, the expression of ideas followed. It was a higher form of hieroglyphic, appealing more to the intellect and not merely to the eye. The Phonetic system possessed a complete alphabet of signs. In addition they employed what are called *determinatives*, to be placed after signs that had a sameness of sound but a difference of meaning. Every word of this description had its determinative, without which the sense would have been vague and obscure. Nothing suggests the great antiquity of the Egyptians, a race prior to any record we possess, more than these hieroglyphics. The earliest discovered take us back almost to the days of Menes, and the system, we have said, was then already in a very perfect condition; a perfection it must have taken ages to accomplish.

A very slight study of the key will enable the visitor to Egypt in these days to understand a good deal of the mystic signs and symbols which cover the walls of many of the buildings and ruins, and the stones and inscriptions preserved in the Boulak Museum. He may learn more in a few days than students had accomplished after years of study, until the discovery of the Rosetta Stone. The names of the monarchs, for instance, are placed in an oval-shaped *cartouche*, or lozenge, and wherever this is found it is a Kingly record. It may be seen on the obelisk now existing on the banks of the Thames. The names of the gods are almost always ideographically expressed, that is figuratively rather than phonetically. The face of the god, for instance, will be represented accompanied by the symbols of the attributes ascribed to him on the monument; or, again, accompanied by the animals specially sacred to him.

All this was an unknown mystery, a dead language, defeating all research until the discovery of the Rosetta Stone, with its triple

inscription. Unfortunately only part of the stone has been found; the remainder probably lies buried in some portion of the ancient city



TEMPLE AT EDFOU.

of Rosetta not yet explored, and it remains, perhaps, to an Egyptologist in some future age to discover the treasure.

But sufficient was found for the purpose. Upon this Dr. Young

went to work. He first gave the clue, but, as we have seen, did not live long enough to accomplish very much. To him, however, the honour of the first discovery. Champollion taking up the clue given by Young, made great strides in the science, and yet furthur raised the mystic veil. The meaning of these signs and symbols was disclosed. He worked out a distinct key for their interpretation. We can imagine that he gazed upon his work much as an alchemist might have gazed upon his crucible which for the first time held gold converted from baser metal. Yet he, also, only accomplished a certain portion, leaving it to others to continue the study and to throw furthur light upon it. It was a very progressive work; step by step, line upon line, passing through many hands. The complete result is due not to one mind but to many minds. England, France and Germany have all contributed to the glory of the revelation. The mystery is a mystery no longer, and the language of hieroglyphics may be read as easily by its students as any other dead language of the world.

Rosetta, where the celebrated stone was found, is one of the prettiest and pleasantest towns in Egypt. It is built on the west bank of the Nile, on an arm of the river which was formerly the Bolbitine, near the ancient town of Bolbitinum.

Of the earliest period of Rosetta and its history, nothing is known. The name in Coptic signifies "City of Joy," and here the inhabitants of Alexandria and Cairo were once wont to come for change of air. All that has passed away; Rosetta has had its day. Half its houses are in ruins, and in wandering through its streets you receive a strange impression of life and decay walking hand in hand. The town is surrounded by a wall that might, perhaps, enable it to repel a feeble invasion of the Beduins or other wandering tribes, but would disappear under the first fire of our modern artillery. The loopholes in the walls, however, serve to give it rather a military and imposing appearance.

Rosetta possesses magnificent gardens on both sides of the Nile: gardens full of fruit trees and tropical vegetation; bananas, spreading apricots, date-palms and sycamores, flourishing with amazing fertility on the very clay of the river. Nothing can be pleasanter than to wander in these lovely gardens. The ground is covered with the narcissus, which flowers twice a year, and the air is laden with delicious perfume. Few travellers, comparatively speaking, visit Rosetta, yet no town in Egypt presents a more Oriental aspect. The overhanging windows with their exquisite carved woodwork meet the eye in every direction, and many of the houses are decorated both inside and out with columns that belong to a far-gone time: most of them, singularly enough, placed upside down by the ignorant Arabs, who took base for capital, and capital for base.

At the beginning of this century, Rosetta was a town and port of considerable note and industry, and numbered twenty-five thousand

inhabitants. The revival of Alexandria, however, was a death blow to Rosetta. The trade she now does is chiefly in rice, but her population has diminished to about fifteen thousand, and, as we have said, many of her houses are in ruins. There is no inn in the whole town for travellers, and he who sojourns there at all must accept the hospitality offered him in the Monastery of the Franciscan monks, where, indeed, he will not fare sumptuously though they give him of their best. Besides the rice trade, a considerable amount of shipbuilding is still carried on at Rosetta. It was from here that the English had to beat a retreat in 1807.

Lotus Flower and Leaf.

And here the Rosetta Stone was discovered by some French engineers in 1798 whilst digging the foundation of Fort St. Julien; one of the most important discoveries ever made in connection with Egypt, leading, as we have said, to the disclosure of the ancient language, which had lain buried in the profoundest obscurity for nearly fifteen hundred years.

Anyone may examine the stone in the British Museum, and in the whole collection under that vast roof there is scarcely a more interesting object. It is composed of black basalt, and the inscriptions in the three languages may easily be traced. Unfortunately only part of the stone exists, and of that part the corners and sides have been much damaged.

The subject of the inscription is a religious decree in honour of Ptolemy Epiphanes, and dates from the year 195 B.C., so that the stone may be said to have been discovered in honour of its nine-

teenth centenary. The king was only fourteen years old. It sets forth all his titles, all the benefits he conferred upon his country, all his noble and generous qualities. It concludes with a resolution to the effect that a statue, a chapel of gold and an image of the king should be placed in every temple: further ordering that the decree written in Hieroglyphic, Demotic and Greek, on a slab of marble, should be placed in all the chief temples. The priests little guessed the benefit they were conferring upon posterity by this act of theirs.

At every step of your way in visiting Egypt, on the right hand and on the left, you are met by these hieroglyphics. They add much to the sense of mystery and mysticism with which the Lotus Land is inseparably connected. We have said that no study in connection with the ancients is more interesting: from the very fact that its singular discovery after the lapse of so many ages had almost caused the hope of success to be abandoned; and because it reveals to us the thoughts, manners and customs, almost everything in short that we know of that early people and those remote ages.

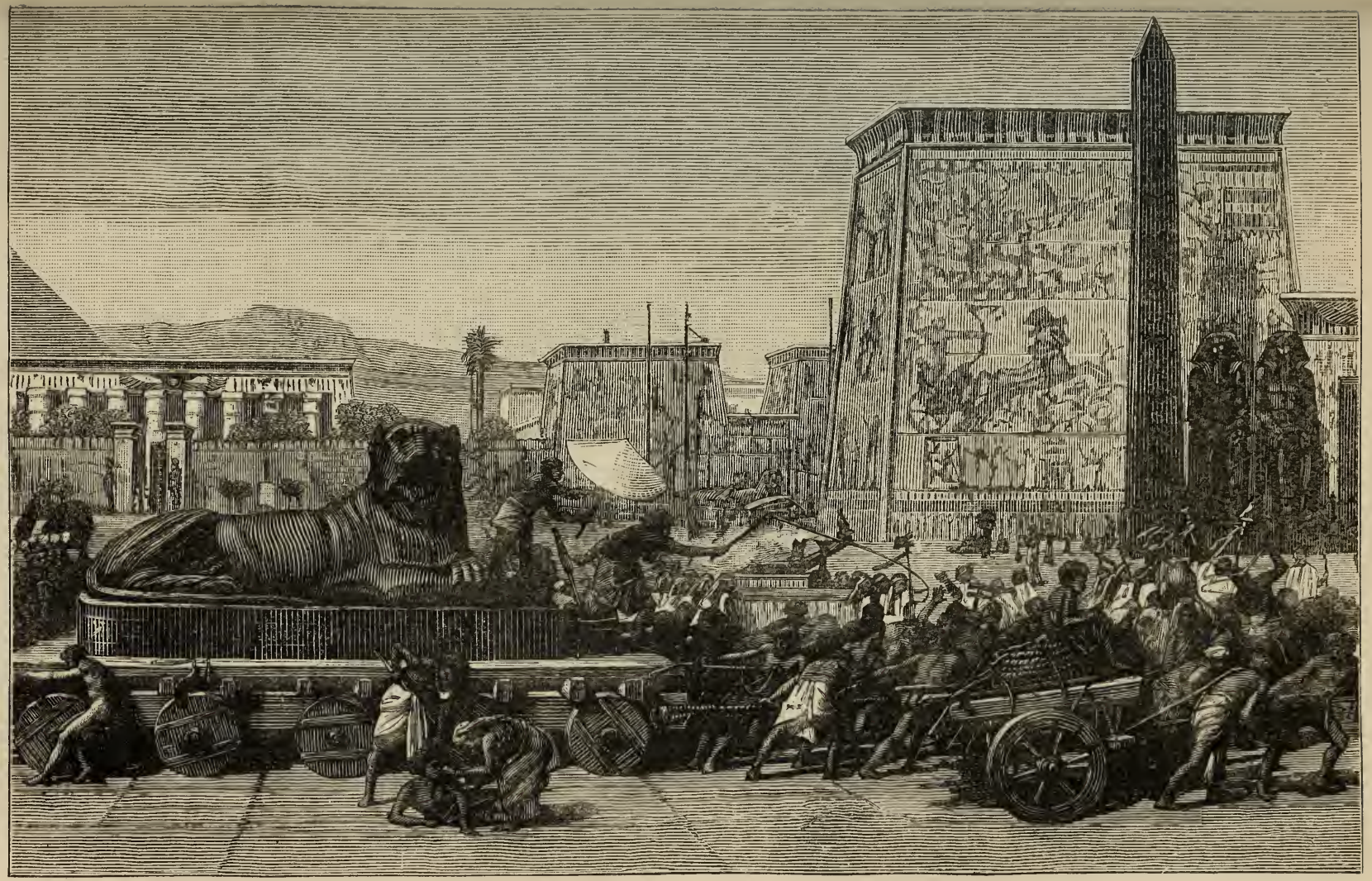
The Coptic writing dates from comparatively modern times—the third century after Christ; and it is due to the fact that the key to this language was never quite lost that so much has been discovered.

Coptic was the language spoken by the Christian Egyptians at that period. They employed Greek characters in writing, with certain signs and symbols borrowed from the Demotic. The whole system from the earliest times has been one of progression.

The Hieratic was nothing more than the hieroglyphic character shortened and curtailed to economize space, time and labour, a distinct progression. Almost all the papyrus manuscripts we possess are written in hieratic; so are the registers of accounts, all the contracts which have been discovered relating to the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth Dynasties; proving that it was the commercial text of that time, therefore the best and most rapid.

The Demotic, as far as can be discovered, came into use only in the seventh century before Christ. It was a still shorter and more concise mode of writing. At a first glance all similarity to the hieroglyphic and hieratic has ceased; it seems altogether a new system and departure. It is more complicated and involved; more difficult to decipher. But in reality it was based upon the systems that had gone before; it contains just the same interweaving of the phonetic and ideographic systems as the hieroglyphic, only a yet further upward progress had been attained. The old condition of things was beginning to disappear; the world was slowly but gradually being educated to a higher level.

The intellect of the world seems to correspond with its typical periods. The intellect of the stone or iron age was slow-moving, but capable of gigantic achievements; it was "wood that would bear carving," metal that would stand the strike of the hammer and give back resistance for resistance, sound for blow. In this, our golden



"Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities."—Exodus, chap. i. ver. xi.

age, it is still capable of great things in a different direction; all is accomplished by the midnight oil and the student's chair. The gold must be delicately handled; it has no great powers of resistance and it wears out quickly. The ancients achieved their great results by art and labour, we by science. It is the natural course of events; it was to be so, fore-ordained in the councils of eternity. In the latter days, knowledge should be increased and men should run to and fro upon the earth. We are probably only on the very threshold of the wonders that will be known and done a few generations hence. The consolation of those who have gone before is that they will have passed into a world where all these things are not needed: a world containing things the eye hath not seen nor the ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.

Side by side with the study of Hieroglyphics, in interest if not in actual importance, we may place that of Art and Architecture: the wonderful archæological remains in Egypt. The one study may almost be said to depend upon the other; for if the ruined temples and other monuments have preserved for us numberless records and inscriptions, these records, by interpretation, have disclosed the age and destiny of many a slab, many a ruined temple, many a buried town on which they have been handed down to posterity. Thus the one study follows as a natural sequence upon the other; or rather, they journey side by side, inseparably linked together.

We have alluded to the ancient pillars of Rosetta, which the barbaric Arabs had placed upside down. Yet this barbarism is by no means evident in Egypt; and the Arabs themselves were not only great in art, but had the greatest artistic influence upon the country they conquered.

There were three great epochs of art in Egypt: the Ancient Egyptian, the Greek and the Arabian. Very much of all has disappeared for ever; Ancient Egyptian art is represented more by its ruins than its perfect monuments; of the Greek, less solid but more elaborate, still less remains; the Arabian, the latest period, survives in its wonderful mosques and ancient houses; but day by day and stone by stone, Arabian architecture is also diminishing; and it also will some day pass away, and be known only in the great records and ruins of the past.

By the Ancient Egyptians, the temples of the Valley of the Nile were called "Everlasting stones;" and the expression is scarcely misplaced. Some of their monuments have existed for five thousand years, and may be said to defy time itself. If the Pyramids show any signs of wear, it is only in those parts ascended and descended by countless tourists. Those Pyramids that have been left to their repose are as perfect as they were thousands of years ago, in the day they were completed. The same may be said of less massive buildings; of obelisks, statues, the ruins of temples, the discovered tombs.

The Ancient Egyptians, as we have seen, came from Asia, bringing their arts with them. But as they responded to the influence of the country and became purely Egyptian, so their art took a corresponding departure and became distinctly Egyptian also; different from anything existing in any other part of the world. But of Oriental art of the period, other than Egyptian, not the faintest trace exists in the present day. The banks of the Nile are full of the ruins of Egyptian art and architecture, and it is impossible without seeing them to obtain a true estimate of their ancient magnificence and extent.

The first period of Egyptian art closed with the sixth Dynasty. Of this period the monuments of Memphis—the city of Menes—are the most remarkable, together with the Pyramids. The Pyramid of Cheops is the largest; but if Manetho is correct in his statement, the Step Pyramid of Sakkara, a day's excursion up the Nile from Cairo, is the oldest building in the world. The temple discovered near the Great Pyramid, and the Sphinx itself, seem probably to have existed some centuries before the Pyramids. Egyptian architecture had one peculiarity, that for long ages after it had become perfected and consolidated it never changed the form and fashion of its art. In this, Sculpture must be included. That their art must have been very primitive in the beginning, their outlines rude and barbarous, is certain; nothing springs at once into full and complete existence; perfection is only reached through apprenticeship; but of the earliest efforts there are no existing traces; all is as much lost as the people themselves. How remote were those days, we have said, is and ever will be unknown; but if the temple at Gizeh was built centuries before the Pyramids, and if the Sphinx in the days of Cheops already needed restoration, we seem to gain an idea of a period the mere contemplation of which bewilders the mind and confuses the senses.

Sacred Scarabæus.

In the fourth Dynasty history began to emerge from its obscurity, and many monuments have come down to us from that period. It was, indeed, one of the greatest epochs of Egyptian enterprise; great in size as well as in accomplishment. Cheops himself was a man of gigantic energy; he was a great warrior as well as a great constructor, as is proved by the bas-reliefs found on the Island of Sinai, which represent him chastising the people of On, Beduins who at that time were making constant raids upon the Eastern frontiers of Egypt. The largest of the Pyramids was built by Cheops and destined to be his tomb, but the tomb-chamber is empty and the

sarcophagus lies open. Man proposes many things to himself, but their disposal is not his own. It is said that one hundred thousand men, relieving each other every three months, were employed for thirty years in building this extraordinary monument.

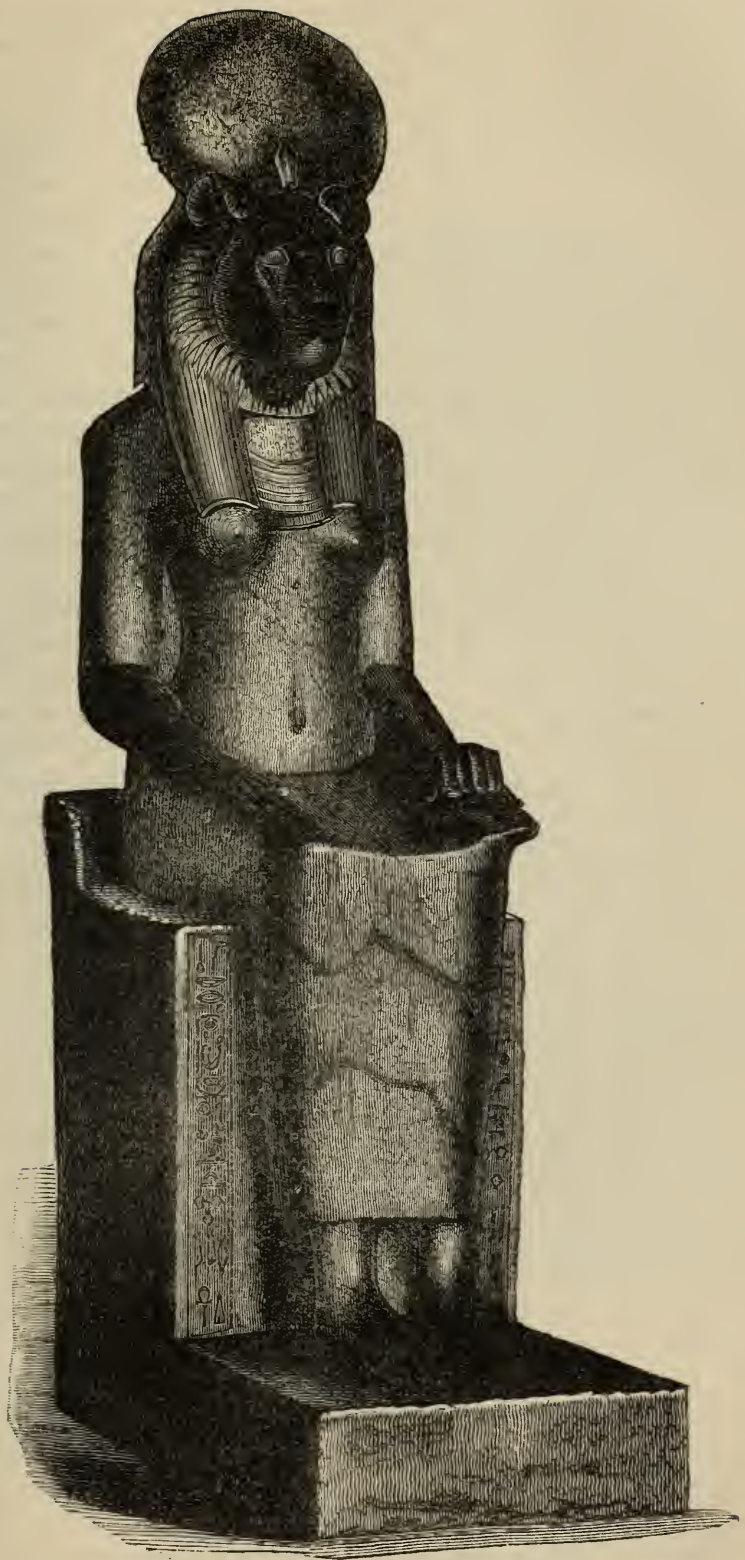
At the beginning of the fourth Dynasty Egypt had become consolidated. She had attained a marked and distinctive individuality which she never again lost until Greece conquered her and introduced her own style of art and architecture, of which Egypt was not wise enough to choose the better part; moreover, it was impossible to reconcile two schools so opposed to each other.

At this period Egypt was already rich and flourishing. Art scarcely ever in later times reached a higher level; towns were built; the soil was cultivated and yielded abundantly; substantial farms, surrounded by rich pastures and fields of grain, were everywhere visible; cattle grew and multiplied; there was peace and plenty in the land. Everyone was happy and prosperous, Egypt rejoiced in her youth and vigour. The Nile was rapidly becoming a river of cities; town after town appeared on her banks, rising with the rapidity with which all enterprises were carried forward in that land where the labourers were many and work was lightly esteemed. The river was the highway of communication in those days, and its white-winged boats passed constantly to and fro. All was life and movement and progress where we now see death and ruin and decay. Then the vessels all had a serious mission to fulfil; life's labour and work, the advancement of wealth and the country; pleasure came after business. Now the situation is reversed: the vessels that ply to and fro are bent on amusement; their noisy crowds, the assembling of all nations, have only one object in view—to satisfy curiosity and to kill time; if we omit those few exceptions who travel for the actual love of nature and for all she gives them in return.

The finest existing sculpture of that period is the statue of Chephren in the Boulak Museum, the builder of the second Pyramid. This statue is not less than six thousand years old, and yet is as artistically perfect, from an Egyptian point of view, as anything that came after. It is full of grave dignity, almost of majesty, in its clear, severe outlines, its uncompromising attitude.

Decision, a clear grasping and carrying out of their idea is, indeed, one of the great characteristics of Egyptian talent. They had never to say in those days as we often say in these, "It is not what I wished it to be." They conceived and they had the power to accomplish; and their manner of work was very much the same as ours; they employed the same means to their ends.

There are also in the Boulak Museum magnificent tombs and sarcophagi of the same epoch, of red and black granite, full of a beautiful execution in their simple and dignified outlines. If the ancients possessed few of the charms of detail, they had none of the horrors of its trivialities — an inconceivable gain. Simplicity and



BLACK STATUE OF SEKHET.

nobleness were the lines on which they worked; almost the only ornament this Lotus Land permitted itself in its monuments was a reproduction of the beautiful lotus-leaf.

Six thousand years ago the lotus was the typical flower of the land, as to-day our islands are symbolized by the rose, shamrock and thistle. In the form of their pillars they often imitated the palm and the sycamore, the representative trees of the country as the lotus was its flower. The monuments of the earliest dynasties are nearly all religious and funereal. The tombs themselves were nearly all constructed upon the same lines, and have already been described. The tombs of this period were ornamented with beautiful statues, pleasing and refined in their outlines, with well-chiselled features, broad shoulders and muscular limbs, of which the Boulak Museum possesses many examples. Here also were found those enormous slabs and monoliths, some bearing inscriptions, others plain and unadorned, many of which have also been transported to the Museum.

From the sixth to the eleventh Dynasty the historical blank extends also to art. In the eleventh Dynasty Egypt seemed to rouse herself from her five hundred years of lethargy. Her old traditions had passed away, a new order of things arose. These days were the middle ages of Egypt. These were the days when Thebes made felt her influence in art and architecture; when Isis appears very prominently in the Egyptian records, extending her winged arms in protection over her brother, Osiris.

The twelfth Dynasty restored to Egypt her full power and civilisation. In art she accomplished great things. Her efforts were brilliant and gigantic. Few of them have come down to us, for almost everything was destroyed by the barbarism of the Hyksos, or shepherd kings. The obelisk at Heliopolis is one of the contemporary monuments, and many isolated and detached columns, the earliest possessed of Ancient Egypt. The paintings found on the walls of the tomb of Beni Hassan prove the country to have been in the highest degree prosperous. The art of sculpture gained in delicacy and refinement, but it was less true to life; already trammelled by sacerdotal influence it lost much of its freedom. They sculptured with marvellous skill upon the very hardest material. Their inscriptions, hitherto in relief, were sunk in the twelfth Dynasty. It is probable that these temples were large and magnificent.

Later came the shepherd kings—barbarians, who seemed only anxious to destroy all traces of the beauty and civilisation with which they had no sympathy. They destroyed, but they did not create; they did not pull down great edifices for the purpose of erecting others upon their own lines.

But in the seventeenth Dynasty a slight reformation appeared in these matters; the Hyksos seemed to awaken to something like remorse. The Egyptian kings were reigning at Thebes, whilst the

Hyksos ruled at Sân : it was a double dynasty. The example and civilisation of the Theban monarchs seems to have penetrated to them at length, and they, too, began to build. They had gradually fallen into greater sympathy with their surroundings ; ornamented their temples with gigantic sphinxes, reproducing their own likenesses in the heads. But their reign was almost over when this awakening to better things arose, and the harm they had done could never be remedied. They had destroyed antiquities of inestimable value.

On the Rosetta Branch of the Nile.

In the eighteenth Dynasty Egypt was more powerful and more energetic than ever. All the ruined temples in the Valley of the Nile were rebuilt ; all the industrial arts revived. Near the fourth Cataract, at Gebal-Barkal, Amenophis III. founded a temple approached by magnificent avenues of Sphinxes in the form of rams. Queen Hatasou erected two great obelisks, of which one is still standing in the ruins of Kamao. The antiquities belonging to this date still existing are numerous. Their work was admirable ; they sculptured upon the hardest material with a boldness and perfection of outline nothing less than amazing. Thebes is still full of ruins that date back to the eighteenth Dynasty ; both sides of the river are equally rich in remains. Amenophis III. founded the great temple of Luxor, which was so elaborate and magnificent that it was not completed until the twenty-sixth Dynasty. The whole of Egypt is full of ruins and remains belonging to this dynasty,

which, more than any other, has helped to furnish our modern museums with antiquities. The Egyptians were especially prolific in works of bronze, in statuettes, and in their potteries.

The nineteenth Dynasty was also great in its efforts. Rameses II. built much, but began the system of effacing the shields and names of other kings and substituting his own, thereby gaining much honour that he never deserved. Very far from being the hero he is represented, he seems to have been devoid of principle and integrity, and all that he did was for his own glory rather than the good of his country. The battles he fought were all over before he was twenty-three, and it now appears probable that a predecessor and not he himself was the great and legendary Sesostris of the Greeks. Nevertheless, his reign was a long one, and as he was ambitious of leaving a brilliant reputation behind him, he built enormous and magnificent monuments and temples in different parts of Egypt. The Ramesseum on the left bank of the Nile was his work, and very probably the Children of Israel were employed, oppressed and driven in raising this gigantic edifice. He also began to rebuild the famous Temple of Sân, which has lately been discovered full of remains : obelisks, monoliths and innumerable pillars and slabs, some of colossal dimensions.

The twentieth Dynasty began with Rameses III. : a successful and warlike monarch. Many remains in the form of bas-reliefs have been found recording his deeds.

After this monarch art began to decline : the glory of Egypt seemed to have set. She lost her Asiatic conquests, other nations came down upon her, and in the twenty-first Dynasty she was broken up into two countries : a house divided against itself. Her unity had departed.

Nothing very worthy of note took place until the twenty-sixth Dynasty, under the Saïtes, when there was a certain revival. But very little remains of this period excepting the wonderful tomb of Apis at Sakkara, with its interminable subterranean avenues, where the blackness of night and the silence of death for ever reign amongst these mysterious passages and monuments, until in walking through the one and gazing upon the other you almost feel as if you had actually left the world and passed into those regions of darkness of which Osiris was ruler and judge.

These Saïtes had their capital at Sais, in the north of Egypt, where "they built them a city to dwell in," but of which nothing has come down to us excepting a confused mass of ruins. Yet they accomplished some of the most important and gigantic buildings that Egypt has possessed. Their work was also of a high order. Their hieroglyphics were most beautifully engraved ; their statues were less stiff and more true to nature than much that had gone before. They largely employed the black or green basalt stone, which was at once hard and fine in texture, adding much to the beauty and refinement of their work.

After this came the Persian rule, and for Egypt everything was changed. She lost much of her individuality. The country became unsettled, and, given up to wars and dissentions, had neither heart nor time to devote to the raising of gigantic monuments, the progress of art.

Under the Ptolemies the Greek influence appears. The two

THE APIS TOMBS AT SAKKARA.

schools could not assimilate; they had nothing in common. The Greek school in trying to accommodate itself to the Egyptian only spoilt the latter. Egyptian art would admit of no interference. From its earliest days it had never altered; never emerged, as it were, from a certain elementary simplicity which admitted neither detail nor elaboration: which was totally devoid of drawing and perspective, yet was undoubtedly full of a certain dignity and grandeur which become more manifest and imposing with familiarity.

The admiration for Egyptian art is no doubt an acquired or cultivated taste. To those who gaze upon it for the first time, and have given neither thought nor study to the subject, it can never appeal: but in their simple methods it is certain that the Egyptians very nearly approached the "art of concealing art," which is one of the highest and rarest of virtues in the world of achievement. The Ptolemies built immensely on the banks of the Nile and left immense remains behind them. They completed the finest portion of the tomb of Apis at Sakkara, and placed there the gigantic sarcophagi that amaze and bewilder those who look upon them. But perhaps their most important monument is the Rosetta Stone, when we consider that to this stone is due our discovery of the writings and language of ancient Egypt.

Egyptian art has never been imitated. It cannot be mistaken, for it never changed its lines. It was essentially religious and symbolic, and its destiny was chiefly architectural. It was much under the control of the priests, and this was a reason for its remaining stationary in its essential points. The priests were eminently conservative, and opposed progress and change. If these brought with them wisdom and enlightenment it would jeopardize their power, if not their very existence. They preferred that all things should remain as they were. Progress was atoned for by the actual grandeur and majesty of the school, due to all absence of detail. Egyptian artists aimed at a general effect, and in this they were wise; for the mind never grows weary and satiated by a grouping together of separate effects. Criticism, that terrible impediment to progress, is not aroused. Nothing small or minute was attempted; their lines were bold, decided and comprehensive. Since their art was symbolic, they did not attempt to reproduce real life.

Thus we gaze upon Egyptian art as upon something outside ourselves, and with which we are not altogether in sympathy, however much we may admire its broad principles. It was intended to represent the superhuman. The priests forbade all study of anatomy in order that their art might remain purely symbolical. Death to them meant more than life; consequently, not the human but the imperishable was to be represented. But that they were strong in imitation is proved by the wonderful manner in which they reproduced the human head with all its varying expressions. They only needed practice and liberty to become great and faithful copyists of nature. They gave very little attention to painting. What they did was chiefly decorative, and appears on capital bas-reliefs and mouldings; relieving the enormous surfaces of walls, embellishing the interiors of their tombs. Their colours through a period of four thousand years have remained fresh and vivid. On some of their old MSS. and papyrus many of their small drawings were executed with marvellous skill and fidelity.

In their temples they aimed at space and vastness, just as the

Indians aimed at depth and mystery, the Christians at height, each idea in a sense embodying the chief characteristic of the creed. Everything with the Egyptians was made to last for ever. Their foundations were gigantic. Time was not to destroy their monuments. They firmly believed in the immortality of the soul, and they wished to consider the body equally imperishable. They did their best to make it so by their system of embalming. As after a thousand years the soul was to be reunited to the body, therefore their tombs must be built to defy time. They must be hewn out of the rock itself; the sarcophagus chamber must be rendered as secret and secure as possible; the body left to its long repose. If it were disturbed or defaced, the soul at the end of its separation would not be able to re-enter its former tenement: the death of the body would be eternal.

Thus all the monuments of Egypt are built for solidity and endurance; whatever their height, their bases and foundation were far greater. In all the Pyramids their extent of area is infinitely more than their elevation. This, perhaps, is one reason why at a first glance those wonderful Pyramids of Gizeh are slightly disappointing. Their height first strikes you as far less than you had imagined; their enormous size is comparatively hidden. Grace and elegance, beauty of form and outline, all this was discarded in building the tombs and temples. Strength and substance were the objects of their aim and ambition. And with extraordinary skill and energy and determination, they carried out their ideas: accomplishing what would have been impossible to everything but fanaticism or the earnestness and enthusiasm of a profound religious belief. And the religious element in their temples impresses the beholder with profound emotion.

But art in Egypt was to decline, and after the Ptolemies the decline was marked. Under the Romans very little was accomplished. Egypt was losing day by day her ancient and distinguishing individuality. Everything was passing away: art, dress, language and writing. A new order of things was being introduced with almost a violent transition. The Egypt of the past was expiring.

Under Theodosius came the final end. He established Christianity, and the Egyptian religion, her sacred legends, her language and her hieroglyphics were doomed. When the Arabs conquered the country, Egyptian art and influence had long been forgotten; they found it ready to accept the new art, influence and impressions which, with all their characteristic energy, they at once began to spread throughout the length and breadth of this wonderful Lotus Land.

A CONFESSION OF LOVE.

By the Author of "The Village Blacksmith."

THE angelus-bell was ringing from the picturesque little church of St. Senier, a village just below the town of Avranches, in Normandy.

As it rang Marie Lesage finished milking the last cow in the farm-yard close by the church; she rose at the sound, and put her milking-stool under her arm, while Jean Tissot, who was standing by her side, mechanically doffed his cap, and there was silence for a minute between them.

The previous conversation had apparently been very animated, for Marie's cheeks were flushed, and her bright eyes sparkled like diamonds under her dark brows, while Jean looked on the verge of despair as he gazed distractedly on Marie's pretty profile and charming little figure, in its neat grey dress and white apron.

Marie was the farmer's daughter, and did not wear the ugly loose black jackets and unbecoming round flat caps, redeemed from ugliness by their streamers of the Avranches peasants. No, Marie was a coquette, and wore short petticoats because she had small feet; a tight bodice, because she had a charming figure; a red rose in her black hair, because it contrasted well with her raven plaits; and a white muslin fichue over her grey dress, because it showed to advantage her clear olive skin.

The angelus-bell ceased, and Jean resumed his conversation.

"Marie, I meant it. If you won't marry me, I will go to sea."

Jean was very handsome; he had golden hair and a long golden moustache, blue eyes and a complexion bronzed by exposure to sea and sun; he was goodly to look at in his knitted blue jersey.

"Ah! ah! Jean, you all say that. Pierre said it, and Jacques and Robert. Tell me some news—I am used to that old tale. "If you do not marry me, I will go to sea," mocked Marie.

"They said it, and I do it. I say it, and by our Lady I'll go this very night if you don't promise to marry me," said Jean fiercely.

Marie turned a shade paler, but she laughed as she answered:

"Well, Jean, I believe a sailor's life is a very happy one; you can try it."

"A happy life! You pretend to believe I can be happy without you? Why, I would give ten years of my life if I had only eleven to live, to hear you say you love me, and you know it."

Marie coloured with delight; this was the strain she loved to hear; this was sweetest music to those naughty little ears.

"If you didn't know it there might be some hope for me. Fool that I am to tell you," continued Jean.

"I can't contradict you," laughed Marie, but the laugh was not so merry as she meant it to be, and the fingers that grasped the milking-stool trembled visibly.

"Cruel! Coquette!" muttered Jean beneath his breath "Well, adieu, Marie Lesage. You may search all France and you will never find a man to love you as I love the very earth you tread on," and his blue eyes flashed fire as he spoke.

"Au revoir," said Marie lightly.

"No—it is not au revoir. Let us understand each other for once, if you please. If we part to-night it is adieu for ever. I shall go to Havre and get a berth on board some ship, going Heaven knows where, and never so long as I live, Marie, do I set foot in St. Senier again. If I go to the bottom, all the better."

"For me?" interrupted Marie, looking archly at him under her long lashes.

"For you?—yes, for you. For if I were dead, perhaps you would come to your senses; perhaps if I were lying in my grave you would know what I know now. In spite of all your scorn of me, Marie, I believe, nay, I am sure you love me," said Jean.

Marie trembled and turned paler, but she threw up her head haughtily as she replied: "I like your conceit."

"I wish you liked me," said Jean dejectedly.

"I dare say you think I shall cry my eyes out when you are gone to sea. Well, go, mon cher, and we shall see. Adieu," and Marie made her lover an elaborate curtsey and ran into the house, leaving the disconsolate Jean to his own reflections.

They were not happy, those reflections. He meant all he had just said to Marie. He meant to go to sea, since she refused to marry him. He believed she loved him in spite of that refusal. He felt sure it was her love of coquetry that made her refuse, but he would not be trifled with any longer.

Marie had gone too far; he would go still further, even as far as Havre, and from there wherever it pleased the winds of Heaven to take him; but that night he would shake the dust of St. Senier off his feet for ever.

He was a fisherman, he had a boat of his own and a house; and Marie had a dowry, so there was nothing to prevent them from marrying at once—nothing except Marie's perversity. How provoking she was; and the worst of it was he loved her so desperately—the more she scorned him, the more he loved her, and the little coquette knew it.

He turned on his heel and gave a farewell glance at La Métairie, with its thatched roof and dormer windows, its roses and its poplars, all of which he loved so well: he should never see them again; the swallows would come back next spring and build in the eaves over Marie's window, but he—he would never, never come back.

Happy swallows! Miserable, miserable Jean! One last lingering look, and then Jean turned his back on the farm and walked through the village; past the cotton factory and the great water-mill that worked it, and the poplars that surrounded it, towards the pretty little church with its quaint spire. The church-door was open, and Jean turned in; by that time to-morrow he would have only a plank of wood between him and eternity. He would light a candle to our Lady, Star of the Sea, to watch over him, and go to confession before he left his native place for ever; he would do the best he could for his soul; earthly happiness was denied him; thank God there remained a Heaven to win.

The confessional stood in a dark recess, at the opposite side of the church to the door by which Jean had entered; there was a bell close to it, with which to summon the priest, if he was not in the confessional.

The church was empty, and Jean having lighted a candle and said a prayer at the Lady-altar, went into the confessional and knelt there, knowing the priest would come and sit, as he always did, at half-past six.

Presently Jean's devotions were disturbed by a step he would have recognised in Australia or Siberia as Marie's; it advanced up the aisle to the Lady-altar, and there it stopped.

Jean rose from his knees, and, peeping round the corner of the recess, looked to see if he were right, though he had not a shadow of doubt on the subject. Yes, it was Marie. She now wore a little straw hat trimmed with a wreath of rose-buds, and she had removed her apron, and wore a little blue shawl round her neck.

Her back was towards him, as she knelt with eyes and hands raised towards to the statue of our Lady; she was evidently praying earnestly. Presently a stifled sob reached Jean's ears; then her shoulders began to heave, her head sank on to her hands, and she sobbed wildly for some minutes.

"I was right; she does love me after all: shall I go and comfort her? I dare not; she would scorn me as she has done so often. Oh, if I were only certain she loves me—if I could but be sure," thought Jean.

Presently the sobs ceased, and, as the clock chimed half-past six, Marie rose and came towards the confessional.

As quick as the thought which occurred to him, Jean seated himself in the priest's place in the middle of the confessional, closed the wooden doors and drew the curtains. Marie was coming to confession; he would hear her, and find out if she loved him. The confessional was so dark Marie would not be able to see him if she looked, and he could imitate the priest's voice to perfection.

Marie advanced to the confessional, saw the curtains were drawn and concluded the priest was sitting, so she knelt down by the grating; after a moment's pause Jean drew back the sliding shutter over the

grating, muttered the usual blessing in Latin, and the unsuspecting Marie began her confession.

Jean could just see her profile through the "grille," her full face was turned from him, her eyes were cast down and the lashes were wet with tears. She whispered a few ordinary peccadilloes and then she burst out with a sob:

"Mon père, I am so miserable."

"Why, my child?" said Jean, wondering what on earth he should say when she had finished.

"Because I have driven Jean Tissot to sea. He loves me and I have served him as I serve them all. I laughed at him. I cannot help it, father. I am a coquette. It is my nature. I want to make them love me. I love to hear them say they love me, and then I laugh at them. Ah! but you were right, father. You told me I should do it once too often; I have done it now. I shall never laugh again," said Marie with a sob.

"Why not?" asked Jean, with a beating heart.

"Why not? Because Jean has gone to sea. Oh! father, when he is out fishing, I watch the clouds all the while; if it blows, I am miserable till he comes back; but, when he is at sea, miles and miles away, oh! what shall I do? what shall I do? He will never come back here, never, never; he says so; oh! it will kill me," and Marie rocked herself in an agony of grief.

"Do you love him, then?" asked that wicked Jean.

"Love him? I am dying of love for him. I shall die unless he comes back. I cannot live without Jean. Oh! father, I never loved any man but Jean; he is my first love and my last. Oh! what shall I do?"

What answer that rascal, Jean, would have made to this question wrung from Marie's heart in the agony of her remorse will never be known, for at that instant the sacristy door opened, and simultaneously Jean jumped up, bolted out of the confessional almost into the old priest's arms as he came towards it, and down the aisle as fast as his legs would carry him.

The priest, amazed at such extraordinary conduct, pulled aside the curtain to see if any one was kneeling at the grating, saw Marie, whom he recognized, sobbing her heart out, and seating himself in his part asked in astonishment:

"My dear child, what does this mean? Who is that man?"

"What man, father? I have seen no one but you," sobbed Marie.

"But I have only just come into church."

"Haven't I been confessing to you, father?" said poor Marie in an agony of terror.

"No, a young man in a blue jersey rushed out of the confessional as I came into church; it looked like Jean Tissot," said the priest.

"Oh, father! I shall die of shame now. Oh! what will become

of me? I have been confessing to you, as I thought, that I loved him. Oh! I wish I were dead. I would have died, before I would have said what I have just been saying to any one but you."

"Poor child. Tell me all about it," said Père Legrand.

So poor Marie made her confession a second time, feeling more shame and mortification than despair this time.

"What shall I do, father?" she concluded.

"Nothing; leave it to Jean to act. But promise me you will forgive him."

Marie gave the required promise, and shortly after the priest dismissed her, telling her to send Tissot to him if she met him, as he had committed a very grave sin.

There were several people in the church now waiting for the service at seven, but Jean was not amongst them. Marie finished her devotions, and then, not knowing whether she most hoped or feared to meet Jean, left the church.

It was getting dusk now, but it was light enough for her to distinguish Jean's handsome face waiting for her in the porch, as she closed the church-door.

The hot blood rushed into her cheeks, her heart beat violently; the end of all things seemed at hand; would the ground open and swallow her up?

The ground showed no such inclination.

A man's arms opened and folded her to his heart.

"At last, Marie! You can never deceive me again—I know the truth now. No, you shall not stir from here till you promise to be my wife," whispered Jean, kissing her passionately.

"Let me go, Jean. Some one will see us."

"I don't care who sees us. Promise," said Jean.

"I promise. Now let me go. And you go to Père Legrand, he is waiting for you. Oh! Jean, how dreadfully wicked you have been. I don't know what the priest won't do to you," said Marie, who thought by making the most of Jean's offence to cover her own confession.

"Oh Marie! I am so happy; I can't be sorry I did it. Must I go to the priest?"

"Yes, unless you would rather go to Havre," said Marie archly.

"Well, come and wait for me," said Jean, who did not relish this visit. However, he went into the confessional and Marie waited for him.

"I shan't play that trick again, Marie, as long as I live," he whispered, when he came out.

"There is no need to do it again," answered Marie. And Jean Tissot never went to sea.

And Pierre and Jacques and Robert wondered what arts he had employed to win his bride; but that secret was one neither they nor any one else in St. Senier ever discovered.

THE PORTRAIT PAINTER.

IN the good old days before inns became hotels, and when the London coach pulled up twice daily at the door of every posting house of importance within fifty miles of the metropolis, it was not an uncommon thing for some young artist, stranded for the want of the price of a week's lodging, to paint anew the sign that hung above the hostel door.

Philip Hardinge—so the young man called himself—had lodged and boarded for a week past at the expense of Old Guy Wethered, the landlord of the "Jolly Farmer," at Tapford, a Berkshire village of a certain importance at the time now written of. The young man had brought no luggage with him but a small valise and some painting materials. No one knew who he was or where he came from, and he brought no recommendation, save his sad but handsome face—if that could be considered to be any.

When the week had elapsed Guy Wethered, as became a good man of business, presented his score to Master Hardinge, together with a gentle hint as to the footing upon which the latter stood in his house.

"I do-ant say," began the landlord, "and I do-ant know, if you be somebody or if you be nobody—no offence!—but I'm an old man and you're a young'un—and you may think I do-ant know that I've got a daughter—and you may be sartin that casting sheep's eyes at her do-ant get added to your score! But I tell ye, young man, my girl Grace will marry none but a gentleman born, and I'll have no son-in-law but a man with a full purse."

Master Philip Hardinge listened to these words with a sorry heart. But the landlord's bullying caused no change in his face or manner.

"Here are the last gold pieces I have in the world, honest Guy. They will scarcely discharge my score. I must get more to-morrow. As for your daughter, Grace, none ever yet saw her without loving her. But she is too wise a woman and too dutiful a daughter to marry without her father's approval. Be content, sir, with this."

He walked quickly away, leaving Guy Wethered agape at his gentle manners and perfect straightforwardness. When the old man recovered his self-possession, he felt obliged to admit to himself in confidence that "the lad might almost be a gentleman, if he wasn't an artist."

At this moment Hardinge returned to make an inquiry.

"You told me the Manor House yonder was bought lately by one John Goodchild—an old farmer—did you not?"

"Ay. But you wo-ant make your fortun' at the Manor House. Farmer Goodchild do-ant treat folk that visits him exactly like an angel. They do say, as heared it for certain, he'd a bad son."

"A bad son!" mused Philip Hardinge. Then he inquired if it were not true that Goodchild was away from home.

"Ay, true enough. But he's back again this mornin'. He wo-ant make a rich man o' ye, I warrant. No love of art—as ye call it—in Farmer Goodchild!"

Philip Hardinge thanked him for his warning, but set out nevertheless for the Manor House. The young man was absent for an hour or two.

When he returned, his look of disappointment and shame went to the heart of Guy Wethered.

"Look ye! my lad. Your calling baint over-profitable in these parts. Where's your friends? They's bound to help ye."

"Friends!" said Philip bitterly. "I've no friends—save folk like you, and—and Grace."

"Well, well—it's not Guy Wethered as 'll be hard on one as is down. Look ye! young master. Just you put a coat o' noo paint on yonder signboard, 'Ye Jolly Farmer,' and when 'tis done we won't take any notice if there's a few shillings due either way, for or 'gainst, 'twixt you and me. How'll that suit ye?"

Philip thanked the old man for his kindness, and set about the work forthwith. "The Jolly Farmer's" weatherbeaten cheeks had some colour infused into them, and the rest of his faded appearance was restored to the standard of civilised life. But what most astonished the owner of the signboard was that the Jolly Farmer was thus transformed into a speaking yet flattering likeness of Mr. John Goodchild, the owner of the Manor House.

Master Philip, having no right to trespass further on the generosity of the landlord, now took his leave, and marched up the road to London. At the turn of the way, he looked back and kissed his hand to Grace, who watched his disappearing figure from the inn door. A few minutes later on, Guy Wethered found his pretty daughter wiping away a tear, and he made a mental note of the fact.

A whole long year had crawled away, and nothing more had been heard at Tapford of the handsome young painter who renovated the sign of the "Jolly Farmer."

By this time Farmer Goodchild came to be well known at the inn. He took a special fancy to Grace, and was never tired of telling her that if he were young enough he would go through fire and water to win her for a wife.

One day, when Goodchild was in a better humour than usual, and when Grace, for some reason which her father could not divine, was in better spirits than she had enjoyed since Philip Hardinge went away, Guy Wethered ventured to ask if the farmer had ever noticed the painting on the signboard.

"Not he!" replied the latter. "He was not in the habit of troubling his head about portrait painting and such-like waste of good

materials. If a man only knew how to paint a house, now!—*that* was something practical, and he would get good wages, even in these hard times!—would he not, Mistress Grace?"

"Well, well; there's somewhat in that, sir," remarked the landlord; "and sure enough, it was a poor profit the young man made out of this job—let alone his regular trade."

"What young man?"

"One Hardinge," explained Wethered, "who lay at the inn well nigh thirteen months agone."

"Hardinge!" repeated Goodchild. "My wife's name—God rest her soul—was Hardinge. And this Hardinge daubed your signboard, did he?"

"Ay, ay—but the rascal daubed to some account, for he left the 'Jolly Farmer' to swing here in the likeness of Master John Goodchild."

"Me!" cried the farmer. "How so?"

"'Tisn't for me to say," answered Guy, "but it's my humble opinion he owed you a grudge for refusing him a job, when he called upon you."

"The beggarly scoundrel!" shouted Goodchild, rising from his chair and pacing the room in great agitation. "The ungrateful young rascal! Why—it is my own son, sir! my ne'er-do-weel only son—Philip Goodchild! Didn't I bring him up from his cradle for a respectable farmer like myself? Didn't I discourage his dreams and his fancies, and rub out his chalk drawings on my oak fences? Didn't I send him to the most expensive school in the country, to teach him Latin and Greek and manners. And after all I've done for him, and all I've said—if he doesn't go and leave me here to take care of the pigs, and betake himself off to London to become famous, forsooth! and a beggar!"

The effect of this burst of eloquence was to strike Guy Wethered dumb with amazement. What a good-for-nothing! what an ingrate! what a criminal was this son, who threw away the chances provided by so wise a father!

The two old fellows condoled with one another till there was no more to be added to the condemnation of so vile a wretch as this monster of ingratitude—Philip Goodchild—otherwise Hardinge.

"And to think," exclaimed Guy Wethered, as a sort of parting shot, "that the young villain cast sheep's eyes at my Grace!" and he looked at his daughter.

To his surprise the girl hid her face in her hands, and began to sob hysterically.

"For shame, father!" she cried. "Philip is no villain. He is a brave gentleman and you don't know——"

"There, there!" said Wethered, trying to sooth her, and honestly sorry to have said or done anything to hurt his daughter's feelings.

"What is't, my chick? what is't we do-ant know?"

"I've had a letter," sobbed Grace.

"Mercy me! girl—what! from him?"

"Yes, father."

"Why, this is serious!" broke in Farmer Goodchild. "The boy's a downright blackguard!"

"A most improper young man!" added Guy Wethered, knitting his shaggy eyebrows.

"And he says——"

"Ay—what does he say?"

"He says that he is on his way hither."

The indignant parents looked at one another aghast.

"He shall never enter *my* doors again," said Goodchild, with an oath.

"Nor mine," added Wethered, with another expletive.

"And he says——"

"Ay, ay; let's hear it, girl!"

"He says he's making his fortune——"

"The devil he is!"

"The young dog! that's quite another matter."

"And he says——"

"Well, well; out with it, miss."

"He says the King sent for him——"

"The King!"

"Yes, and his Majesty has done him great honour, and will have him make the Queen's portrait, and be henceforth one of the Royal Painters in Ordinary."

"What! what! Neighbour Goodchild, we've been hasty."

"You were hasty, neighbour."

"Not I, Farmer; it was you, sir. But—heaven be praised! Here's the honest lad himself coming down the road, and—Grace, my sweet love, go you to the door to meet him, and bring him hither, and we will all drink the king's health together——"

"And yours, pretty Miss Grace," added Goodchild.

"And yours, Farmer——"

"And yours, Landlord."

And they did so.

Before the day was out, Grace was betrothed to Philip Goodchild, and before the month was out, the pair were man and wife.

All Tapford was invited to the wedding. And—what is more—all Tapford took care to come.

After this, it is almost needless to add that there never lived a happier pair than the landlord's daughter and the Portrait Painter.

A DOUBLE BLUE.

I.

"HERE, boy! paper! —— He is coming."

The speaker, a middle-aged clergyman, uttered the last words in a lower tone and drew himself back from the carriage window, leaving his niece to deal with the paper-boy now that he had come.

"Have you yesterday's *Sporting Life?*"

A sedate lady, who was reading the "Life of Bishop Hannington" on the opposite side of the carriage, nearly dropped her book in her surprise at such a request from a girl's lips, and the boy replied that they might have it at the stall, and vanished to get it.

"That's right," said the girl as she caught sight of the boy running down the platform, just as the train was about to leave the station; and she held her hand out with the penny in time to secure the desired paper.

"Here it is, uncle," and the clergyman appeared as interested as she was, which made the elderly lady resume her spectacles and Bishop Hannington, though she kept her ears open for what might follow.

"'University Athletic Sports,'" read the girl. "'Excellent performances; bright weather prevailed—' Never mind that. Oh, here it is."

"'Then the nine milers toed the mark, with the result that C. Vyvyan gained the laurels which he so richly deserves.' Then come some uninteresting things—putting the weight and high jumps. But here is a description of the mile. Look, uncle. 'At the quarter-mile post Vyvyan shot to the front.' 'For the last three hundred yards it was a great race for the supremacy, but the leader slightly improved his position climbing the hill.' 'Down the straight the pair raced in fine style after the winner, but a well-deserved victory rested with Vyvyan by nearly eight yards.'"

A tremor in the girl's voice made the old lady look up, and her face softened a little as she began to grasp the situation.

"Vyvyan" was the name on the well-worn Gladstone bag on the seat, and before Cambridge was reached, the lady had arrived at the conclusion that the girl was going to see her brother run in the University Sports which would end to-day.

As the train steamed into the station Mr. Vyvyan possessed himself of his bag and umbrella, and his niece hurriedly scanned each figure on the platform.

"Charlie is not here, but I see Mr. Whitaker."

The young man in question now came up.

"Charlie is in for an exam. and I am to take you to his rooms. Shall we go down by tram?" relieving Miss Vyvyan of her bag and cloak.

"Thank you. He had our telegram then?"

"Oh, yes. He's delighted you can come. You will see him distinguish himself this afternoon."

"I hope so," said Mr. Vyvyan; and the three took their places in an empty tram, and found themselves at last in the college.

"These are my rooms," said Mr. Whitaker, as they ascended the stairs, "and Furniss is there. You know him? And this is Charlie's."

"How delightful," cried the girl, while her uncle seated himself in a well-cushioned chair, adjusted his spectacles, and surveyed the room.

"And here is breakfast awaiting you," said Mr. Whitaker, producing various dishes from before the fire.

"Breakfast!" laughed Miss Vyvyan. "Why, we had breakfast hours ago."

"All the more reason for a second edition. Will you have tea, coffee, or cocoa? I have only three minutes before I am due at a lecture."

"Tea, please, if all are equally easy;" and the young man produced a tin from the recesses of a cupboard, and made the tea.

"Now I think you have all you want—I am sorry I can't stay, but Charlie will be in soon. There is jam and marmalade in the cupboard." And he left the room.

"Well," said the uncle deliberately, "since it is expected of us we may as well make a meal," and he applied himself to the dainties on the table.

But his niece, Alice, was too much engaged in examining the room to begin to eat yet.

Everything seemed so familiar, and at the same time so much was new. There was the screen she had worked, and the pictures she had painted; photographs of those at home, and Charlie's home possessions, besides portraits of college friends; and prize cups, and numerous athletic groups, in all of which Charlie was. So while Uncle Henry attacked the fish and cutlets in good earnest, Alice took in all these particulars and ran her eye over the Tripos papers which were flung down in a heap with letters and programmes of college concerts.

Then there came a step on the stairs—the quick decided step he always had; and Alice sprang up.

He came in—a tall, fair young man in cap and gown, and brother and sister greeted each other heartily; then Charlie turned to welcome his uncle.

"I hope Whiting met you all right?"

Why Mr. Whitaker went by the epithet of Whiting never clearly transpired even to his nearest friends, who so called him; but this

was a matter of small moment, as no reason beyond its not being the right name is at all necessary for a nickname.

They chatted pleasantly for a little time, Charlie standing with his back to the mantelpiece and his cap a little tilted over his brow.

"You look like Clive Newcome," said Alice; "but, Charlie, what a gown!"

"It is rather ragged," laughed her brother, displaying a considerable length of material which had lost its moorings and hung in tattered dependence; "but that is rather a distinction. Several men are in this condition, though none are quite as bad as mine."

"Have you a needle and cotton here?"

"I don't know," said Charlie, hunting diligently on the mantelpiece. "I had one that belonged to Marsh here a week ago, but I think my Gyp dropped it into the fireplace. Simpson had one, but he lent it to a man out of college."

"What a destitute set," said Alice. "I will get some needles this afternoon."

"Would you like to go out now? We could have a turn before luncheon, uncle."

So the three went into the town, and saw the photographs of Charlie in various windows, and walked round by the backs of the colleges till it was time to return, and Alice noticed how many men her brother knew of those they met on their way.

Luncheon was very soon over, and almost immediately they started for the ground. "That's Vyvyan," Alice heard more than once as they walked up the road.

"He's going to win the Three Mile," said another. Charlie did not hear, and he would have laughed had he done so, but the girl's face flushed with pleasure.

Once on the ground, the stream of men seemed endless, and yet those who greeted Charlie were so many that Alice gave up trying to know who they were.

Mr. Vyvyan took the keenest interest in every event, but Alice was too nervously anxious for the three miles to enter into all Charlie would have had her admire.

It came at last, and when he left them to go into the Pavilion and don his running costume, the girl had forgotten that after all it was merely a race.

"Success to you," she said, and he went off smiling, and then returned to tell them the best place to stand.

"Look at Vyvyan," said a man near to his friend as the athletes came to the starting-point, running a few yards. "He means winning."

Charlie looked up and waved his hand to Alice, with the dauntless smile she knew so well.

Then they started, and three men at once shot ahead of Charlie, maintaining this order for the first round.

"Vyvyan is holding back till the end," said a spectator. "You see him put on a spurt in the last round."

As they pass Alice at the beginning of the last round Charlie is third, and then comes the spurt that has been looked for. He passes the second man and comes up with the first, and then the cheering begins.

"Vyvyan! Vyvyan!" is the cry Alice hears on all sides, and she sees that her brother is leading. They are doing their utmost, but every moment he is improving his position.

The tape is stretched across, the spectators are pressing to the winning-post.

He is up the slope; he is coming towards them. Every other sound is lost in the mighty shout of "Vyvyan! Vyvyan!" from hundreds of voices. Alice is by the rope. Tears are raining down her face from intense excitement.

"Vyvyan! Vyvyan!" she cries, and in the deafening applause no one voice is audible. Uncle Henry's enthusiasm knows no bounds, as he joins his voice to the mighty chorus, and the runner speeds on.

Ten yards! five more, and he is there! There is a ringing cheer, and the time is shouted out.

Then Alice discovers her own tearful condition, and is well pleased to hear the praise of her brother that is on all sides of her.

"Well! I am glad we came," said Uncle Henry, cooling down after his late enthusiasm. "So he has his double blue after all. I suppose he will be some time recovering and changing. Why, no! here he comes."

Congratulations met him from all his friends. His own college had come in a body to see him run.

"Now," he said, "we will get back and have some tea. I have asked Whiting and all the fellows you know."

On the way they went into several shops in search of the desired needle and cotton, but they were fancy shops which did not keep ordinary work materials.

"Never mind, Alice. There's a big shop further down." And Charlie took her into a shop, where they were shown from one counter to another, and then he laughed at the small purchase. But the needles were valued when they reached Charlie's rooms, and Mr. Whitaker hoped they might be left as a legacy to the college.

"Really, Miss Vyvyan, now I've seen how respectable you have made Charlie look," he said, when Alice had mended the tattered gown, "I wish I had brought my gown with me."

It was not till the evening, when brother and sister were alone, that he said half diffidently: "Alice, I think I will send a telegram to my father; it will please him, you know." And so the news found its way to the western rectory by the sea, where all that affected Charlie's college life was carefully treasured; and the errand-boy at the Rectory told the grocer's son, who in his turn told the

members of the cricket club, so that before night everyone in the village knew that "Master Charlie had won the race at Cambridge."

II.

"THE lists will be out the beginning of June," wrote Charlie, and every day in the old Rectory the newspaper was eagerly scanned. But Mathematics, Natural Science and Law appeared, and each day that the Classical Tripos was not in was both a relief and suspense.

"Here it is," said the Rector at last—"Class I., Class II., Class III. My dear, I don't see Charlie."

"Give it to me," said his wife; but Alice's quick eye had caught the name.

"A First-class," she cried. "There it is—Vyvyan. Oh, how delightful!"

Trouble and sickness had come to the Rectory this year, and Charlie had realised the position of affairs when he had been home at Easter. Had things been different he would have stayed on at College another year, now he would try to help them at home.

"My dear fellow," said Whiting, "you are foolish; think of the fellowship."

"Yes," said Charlie; "I have thought of it."

"Are any of your people coming up to see you take your degree?" asked Whiting, who had spent a fortnight at Charlie's home, where he had been received with cordial hospitality.

"No, my father has been ill, and—it cannot be managed." He did not add what might have been added, "It is too expensive." A large family of brothers could not be educated for nothing.

"It is horrid," said Whiting to Marsh when Charlie had left the room; "here is Vyvyan, one of the best men in the University, throwing himself away."

"Foolish of him," said Marsh, lightly.

"Foolish," cried the other, kicking down the fire-irons in his wrath, "I should think so. He takes all his honours as a matter of course and thinks nothing of them. Most men would have been spoilt with the popularity he has. Look at his running, and now a first-class; and he just goes home and helps his mother in the garden and blows the organ for a practice as if he was nobody."

"Well, he must please himself."

"It doesn't please me, though, and ——"

But here Charlie looked in.

"Come out, you fellows. I ought to be packing, and doing hundreds of things, but we shan't be here next week. Come and look Furniss up; we will enjoy ourselves."

And the three went off arm-in-arm.

The news soon spread in the village at home that Master Charlie had passed first-class, and little as the simple folk understood the

matter they rejoiced in his success, and the cricket club looked forward to his return, for he was their captain.

Then he wrote that he had taken a tutorship in a large country house to an only boy who was to be coached for Eton, and his college treasures alone arrived at his home. He felt more in awe of his pupil and his pupil's mother before he saw them than the boy did of him.

"He is Vyvyan, the runner," Eustace said to his mother, and he was shocked when Mrs. Leslie said she had never heard of him.

Eustace himself drove to meet him at the station, and Charlie and he were on very good terms with each other before he reached the Hall.

Mrs. Leslie's welcome was sufficiently cordial, and Charlie wrote home that his lines had fallen in pleasant places.

"I always write to Henry Whitaker when I want anything done," said Mrs. Leslie that evening as the small party sat over dessert. "You see I have no gentleman here to manage things, and I know nothing of schools and tutors."

She said this so piteously that Charlie laughed—a laugh of such real enjoyment that it was infectious.

"Henry is my nephew, you know, and spends much of his time here. He is a good fellow and very useful to me."

"We are great friends," said Charlie, feeling inwardly amused that Whiting's advice should be sought on anything more serious than a tennis racquet.

"I will ask him while you are here. But we will come into the drawing-room and have some music; Eustace and I are very fond of it, and I know you sing."

He fetched his music and Mrs. Leslie looked through it with approval.

"You have 'To Anthea,' I see; will you sing that? The song is so beautiful."

And she played it as he sang it, as if the passion of the song had carried them both away. Charlie's voice was a remarkably sweet tenor, and Mrs. Leslie was charmed. They tried some duets, and Eustace played his violin, and the evening passed very quickly to the three.

Everything went smoothly till Saturday evening, when, as Charlie was saying good-night to Miss Randle, the companion who had to-day returned from a visit, Mrs. Leslie said, "I do not know whether you will care to go to church to-morrow?"

The wondering blue eyes expressed astonishment at the question, and Mrs. Leslie added: "Young men's minds get so upset at the university, but I hope yours has not."

"At what hours are your services?" said the young man simply.

"At eleven and half-past six," replied Mrs. Leslie, and then they separated for the night.

Perhaps the Rector thought a young man at the Hall, who joined

heartily in the service, was a pleasant change, or possibly Charlie reminded him of his only son who had died at college. Anyhow, he called at the Hall on Monday, which was a rare event, and the next Sunday found the new tutor reading the lessons in church.

"The Rector asked me to lunch with him after service," he said to Mrs. Leslie.

"Oh, go, by all means. I hope you won't be bored."

The merry laughter that reached the old housekeeper's ears from the Rectory dining-room carried no suspicion of dullness with it, and many a college story was told by the old man and listened to by the younger with great delight.

"I am sorry you must go," said the Rector at last, sighing as he remembered how unwonted his enjoyment had been; "but you will come again. Will you not lunch with me every Sunday?"

"You are very good, but ——"

"My life is rather dull, but we could talk over Cambridge."

"Thank you. I shall be delighted to come."

"Good-bye," said the old man, and after Charlie had gone he muttered to himself, "He is very like Arthur."

If the year Charlie spent at the Hall was pleasant to him he certainly made it pleasant to those around him, and everyone in the parish was sorry when the time came for Eustace to go to Eton, for the poor people had grown to love to listen to Mr. Vyvyan reading in church, and to hear his clear voice in the choir.

Eustace went to Eton, and Charlie, after a visit at home, was ordained, and entered upon his curacy in a large manufacturing town.

III.

Some of the old inhabitants of Rockshithe were afraid Mr. Vyvyan knew nothing about evangelising the masses when they saw him engrossed in the formation of a cricket club for the factory lads, who were the terror of all peaceable citizens.

It was difficult to get a piece of ground, it was difficult to find an hour that would suit everyone, it was difficult sometimes to keep peace among the lads; but all these difficulties the new curate overcame, and he always played with them.

"A Bible class would have been better," said those who could not entirely condemn the patience and energy which had enabled the curate to take in hand what had not been attempted before.

"They do not come to church," said the lawyer's wife to the doctor's wife, "and I think Mr. Vyvyan is merely encouraging them by the way he has taken them up."

"Well, we shall see," said the other, wisely; and she did see, for one Sunday, as she was entering the porch, she was nearly pushed aside by the curate's cricket club walking in a body to church. It

was hard to satisfy everyone. Now the complaint was that they behaved badly when they were in church.

Much gratuitous advice was given to the Curate, which he took good-humouredly and went on with his work.

The lawyer's wife was happier when she learnt that Mr. Vyvyan had these lads at his house on Sunday afternoons.

(His landlady would have been infinitely happier if they had not been there.)

They found out when Mr. Vyvyan's birthday was, and presented him with a pipe and a tobacco pouch (Charlie never smoked), which he put over the mantelpiece with his challenge cup.

The Vicar would sometimes say: "You are working too hard Vyvyan. Do less for a time;" and Charlie laughed his old boyish laugh, and said he was strong enough for anything.

By degrees the Rockshithe lads outlived their bad name, and clerical neighbours congratulated the Vicar on his Curate. The Archdeacon came to preach one Sunday, and was struck with the large proportion of young men in the congregation and their earnest demeanour.

"It is Vyvyan's doing," said the Vicar afterwards when talking over the parish; "he is a wonderful man."

"Is he the Cambridge Vyvyan, the great runner, you remember, some years ago?"

"I suppose he is. He has some cups in his rooms. I don't know much about those things myself, but I know he took honours. He was a First-class man."

"I will keep my eye on him," thought the Archdeacon; and he did more than this, for he told the Bishop of the wonderful change that had been effected in Rockshithe.

"I shall be going there for a Confirmation before long," said the Bishop, "and I will make a point of seeing Mr. Vyvyan."

After that Confirmation service was over, at which many of Charlie's lads were confirmed, the Bishop said as he wrung the young man's hand:

"It is with the warmest congratulations on what you have been enabled to do here, Mr. Vyvyan, that I give you my heartiest sympathy and prayers for a blessing on your future work."

Charlie stammered something in reply, and the Bishop had to go.

No one could have felt more genuine surprise than the young Curate some time after this, when he received a letter from the Bishop offering him a country living in a beautiful part of the county.

He had other letters by the same post, and soon after breakfast he made his way to the Vicarage. "I wanted to talk to you," he said to the Vicar, as the two seated themselves in the study.

"Yes?" said the Vicar with encouraging interrogation, for he too held a letter in his hand that made him guess the purport of his Curate's visit.

"I have grown very fond of Rockshithe and my work here," said Charlie, "but lately I have thought I must go."

"You have had a letter?"

"It is not a letter which has decided me. You see there is not so much work here as there was."

"Thanks to you," thought the Vicar, but he said nothing.

"And now that I have a little experience, I feel I need no longer delay. I wish to join the Universities' Mission."

"In Africa?"

"Yes," said Charlie quietly, and as he looked up a ray of morning sunlight fell on his bright young face and fair hair.

"Oh, no, Vyvyan," cried the Vicar, springing up from his chair. "You don't know the life there. You have not considered the hardships."

"Other men go, and I am strong."

"And there is so much work to be done in England," said the Vicar, half ashamed of his own objections.

"Other men will do it."

"But we want you."

Charlie walked over to the fireplace in silence.

"The Bishop is going to offer you a living."

"I have his letter. He will easily find another man."

"Vyvyan," said the Vicar gently, "have you thought of your father and mother?"

Charlie's back was turned, but his words came after a gasp.

"I have."

"They consent?"

"Yes."

Then there was silence for a while, broken only by the ticking of the clock.

At last the Vicar said simply, "We shall all miss you." And Charlie, unable to speak a word, pressed his hand and left the room.

A few days later, Charlie said, half laughing; "You will think me foolish, but I should like to see Cambridge again, and if you could spare me Saturday, it is the day for the sports, and they say a man of my college is going to win the three miles."

"Go by all means," said the Vicar; and Charlie telegraphed to Whitaker, whose time was his own, to meet him at Cambridge.

"Why, Whiting," said Charlie as the two once more walked about the familiar ground, "it is like old times."

"You must not go," said Whiting gravely. "It is absurd. It is a sheer waste of power. Anyone could teach those niggers."

His friend said nothing.

"What use will your athletic powers be out there? You could use them at Rockshithe, though that was not a likely spot."

"I may organize sports for the natives," said Charlie lightly.

"Any fool would do for them," continued the other. "You are

throwing away all you gained here. A nigger draws no nice distinctions about university honours."

"I did not talk in Attic Greek at Rockshithe."

"Charlie, you know what I mean—I hoped you would do something great in the world."

It was not often that Charlie expressed his deeper feelings to anyone, least of all to Whitaker, who thought very differently to him on these subjects, but he said now with an effort:

"It seems to me, the greatest thing any man can do is his duty, and I think it my duty to go."

The remainder of his time at Rockshithe passed all too quickly, and there was not standing room in the church when he preached his farewell sermon.

"I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong."

This was the text that would linger in many a heart after that Sunday; and then Charlie went home for a last visit, when summer had made his native county as beautiful as it always is in that season.

IV.

He was still "Master Charlie" to many in the parish where he had been born and brought up, and to the old people he was still a boy. Would he come to the cricket field again, the grocer's son wondered? This young man regarded Charlie as a hero. For his sake he had taken the *Sporting Life* in Charlie's university days, that he might see his running exploits, and Charlie always put him on to bowl with him when they played together in a match.

"He'll be too busy now to come up to cricket," thought John Barker as he trudged along the dusty road to the field. But no sooner had the practice begun than someone said:

"Here comes Mr. Charlie."

John paused as he was about to deliver a ball, and many caps were touched with a hearty "Good evening, sir."

"Good evening," said Charlie. "I am come for a last game with you," and he shook hands with Barker.

"Will you bowl, sir?" said John. "We have no one who is much good at the other end."

So he played till dusk in the field where, as a little boy, he had learnt to play cricket, and he shook hands with them all when the game was over.

"I am afraid I shall not have time to come up again, for there is much to be done, as I sail so soon, but I am very glad to have had one more evening with you. You must no longer call me your captain now, for it is not likely I shall play for you again. I only hope the new captain will enjoy his position as much as I have done."

"Three cheers for Mr. Charlie!" cried one of the men; and the shouts were heard far away in the quiet summer evening.

So by degrees Charlie took leave of all the people and places he had known from his childhood, and then the brothers came home from their various work to spend the last days together at the Rectory. The Vyvyans were poor, as men count poverty, but they were rich in family affection and all that goes to make a home dear to its members.

"Ah," said the grocer to a customer who lingered over her purchases to have a chat over the counter, "Mr. and Mrs. Vyvyan will feel Mr. Charlie's going, I can tell you."

"You're right," said the other; "and I always considered him the flower of the flock."

"Yes," said the grocer, thoughtfully, shaking the tea from the scales into a bag, "I have known him from a baby; always the same. A pleasant word whenever he met you, and always so free. Sure to be first in everything; and never a bit of nonsense or pride about him."

"They've all turned out well, Mr. Barker, and now to think of him going to Africa."

"Yes," said the grocer, tying the packet with deliberation and pressing the well-filled paper with the flat of his thumb; "my son is regularly cut up about it."

"Well, they say everyone is going to church Sunday evening to hear him preach his farewell. I feel for Mrs. Vyvyan. I know a mother's feelings."

"That's right, I believe; ninepence," said the grocer, handing the packet across the counter. "Yes, we shall all go to hear Mr. Charlie."

Saturday was showery, and the weather seemed to cast a gloom over the Rectory party, but towards evening the sky cleared.

"I hope it will be fine to-morrow," said Charlie; for the morrow would be his last memory of the dear old home. "Come out, Alice, for a turn."

And the brother and sister, who understand each other so well, go out arm-in-arm into the garden, as they had so often gone as little children.

The falling roseleaves are thick with raindrops, the blackbirds are singing their evening song with the fulness of tone they always have after rain. The refrain of a song is in Charlie's mind, all nature is joining in the final accompaniment, and his heart is singing, "Good-bye for ever."

They walk round and round the old garden and by the old childish haunts. Here were the gardens of their childhood, where mustard and cress had been sown in their names; there was the oak-tree where they used to sit and read and whose bark bears their initials. Here the ivy they had planted years ago covered the wall, and there the rose-tree Charlie had bought for his mother with his first pocket-money is in bloom.

"Come in, dear," he said; "we must make it cheerful for them all to-night."

But it was a difficult matter to accomplish. When the music began there was so much that could not be sung. Ernest proposed a favourite trio, "When shall we three meet again?" and then, to cover his blunder, burst forth into a jovial sea-song. Then the two brothers sang "Love and War," and Alice played more than one false note as the sweet tenor voice caused the tears to blind her eyes.

After that, Charlie strummed what he called his college accompaniment, for at Cambridge he made every song go to it, and he sang with such merriment that he made them all laugh and forget for a time that they should hear him no more.

V.

EVERYONE knows what a country congregation generally is and how the church appears too large for the people who are in it. This parish by the sea was no exception to this rule, and there were always plenty of empty sittings; but to-night it was different.

The old fishermen were there who generally smoked their pipes at home on Sunday and said they had no clothes fit for church; for had they not taught Master Charlie to swim and row and fish? and they must see the last of him. Mary Brown was there, an old woman who said she did not come to church because she was deaf; for she had been charwoman at the Rectory when Master Charlie was born and she had had a piece of the christening cake.

Of course all the cricket-club were there; they must hear their captain for the last time, and their numbers took away the feeling of strangeness to some of them of being in church. And old men and women came whose rheumatism had long been their excuse for staying at home—they toiled up the hill to hear "the dear young gentleman once more."

Then some came because they had sung with him in the choir as a boy, and some women out of sympathy with his mother; while those who had no association or reason to give for their unwonted appearance, came because others came, and there was a mysterious vagueness in the popular mind about Charlie's future.

Would he go about in a blanket and become a cannibal, or merely travel like anyone else? No doubt this would be made plain in the sermon.

He knew them all, and their faces were as familiar to him as was every hill and tree in the parish. But two came in just before the service began who were strangers—a lady and a gentleman who had come ashore from a yacht in the bay, and who climbed the hill to the church on this bright summer evening.

It was no easy matter to find them a place; and the sexton was

vexed that they had to sit near the belfry and would have made room higher in the church, but the gentleman whispered:

"It is all right. We like to sit here."

He had his own reasons for not wishing Charlie to see him, for this was Henry Whitaker, who had brought his yacht round with his aunt on board, that once more he might see his college friend. He knew this was his last Sunday in England and that he would be at home.

As the organist began to play "How beautiful are the feet," and Whitaker saw the friend he loved so well come into the church, he felt he understood him better than he had ever done before. All the brothers were in the choir, swelling the bass part with their deep voices.

Only Charlie sang tenor, and in the psalms his voice came ringing down the church, and reminded Mrs. Leslie of the first evening she had seen him.—"Like as the hart desireth the water-brooks: so longeth my soul after thee, O God. My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God: When shall I come to appear before the presence of God?"

The organ is swelling, the voices are rising; now they are subdued and soft.

"Why art thou so full of heaviness, O my soul: and why art thou so disquieted within me?"

Then a burst of triumphant confidence, and the lowering sun sends a ray which catches the faces in the choir and lingers as a halo around Charlie's fair head.

"Put thy trust in God: for I will yet give Him thanks."

The Rectory pew is so near the lectern that Alice and her mother sit very still with downcast eyes, as Charlie reads the lessons.

He must not see any emotion; but memory is busy this evening, and they think of the Sunday when he first read in church, when hardly more than a boy.

"God bless him," murmurs an old man, as he closes the Bible.

Mrs. Leslie is wondering how he will get through the sermon, and as the hymn begins he kneels down. Can it be that there is something higher and nobler in life than she has ever known; or why should this man place sacrifice above success?

The hymn is getting slower, the basses are dropping off; the Rector cannot see a word through his blurred spectacles, and the congregation are carrying the organist with them.

A prolonged *Amen* and then the people settled themselves to listen to the sermon. There was no hesitation in Charlie's voice as he gave out his text:

"Unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one."

They were simple, uneducated people whom he addressed, and his words were very plain. He spoke of the one talent of life which God

gives to all to use for him, and he said how God's glory was as much shewn forth in humble unobserved lives as those of greater prominence. Then he dwelt on the way on which all service might be made Divine, and he spoke of the strength of manhood which should be used for God.

He did not hesitate to speak of ordinary life, and fishing, and even cricket. He was putting a motion into all these things, and the silence was growing more intense.

"Never forget," and John Barker caught for a moment the zeal in his face, "that all your joys and pleasures come from the crimson robe of Christ."

They had forgotten that they had expected a sermon on Africa, they had almost forgotten that they would hear the voice no more, so great was his earnestness in their behalf.

Side by side with this sermon, another sermon is unconsciously driving his teaching into their hearts, aye, and into the hearts of hundreds he will never see or know: and that is the sermon preached by his self-sacrifice—perhaps the only sermon to which the world always listens.

The farewell at the end is short; it is hardly more than an appeal for their prayers, and a promise to pray for them always; but this breaks down the composure of many in the congregation, and the final hymn "Abide with me," sung in the gathering twilight, is broken by sobs.

"How lovely are the messengers" sounds from the organ as the people file out and stand in groups talking before dispersing to their homes. Charlie comes out of the vestry and bids the organist good-bye and takes a last look at the dear old church, then joins his mother outside the door.

"Why, Whiting, dear old fellow, you here?"

"Yes, I happened to be yachting near here; and my aunt is with me."

"How do you do, Mrs. Leslie? What a pleasant surprise. Let me introduce you to my mother."

"You will come back to the Rectory with us?" said Mrs. Vyvyan, warmly; but the two made excuses about the boat and said they must not stay; for they knew it was his last evening.

"If you really can't stay, I will walk down the hill with you. How is Eustace?"

"He is doing so well at Eton. But when are you off, Mr. Vyvyan? I wish I could have seen more of you."

"To-morrow," said Charlie.

"Ready, aunt?" said her nephew, "we must not keep the men. Good-bye; Charlie shall only come a few steps with us, Mrs. Vyvyan. We shall be round again this way before long and will come and see you. Good-bye."

And so the sweet summer day comes to a close, and the waves

lap gently on the western shore where he had played as a little boy, as he climbs the hill for the last time. At the top of the hill stands John Barker, leaning over a gate and gazing at the sea. "Good-bye, John; do what you can for them all."

"Yes, sir. Good-bye."

"God bless you."

Neither of them could have said another word. So Charlie Vyvyan, rich in health and strength and influence; rich, too, in that childlike simplicity which made him forget the things he had attained and reach forward to the better things beyond; left the home of his childhood for the unknown life in Africa; and those who loved him so well looked at the bright boyish face which always brought sunshine with it and knew that they might see it no more.

Amongst Mrs. Vyvyan's dearest treasures is a curious collection of cuttings from newspapers — a notice of a classical scholarship, some extracts from *Sporting Life*, in peculiar slang, about the University Sports, the list of the Classical Tripos, and two years' ordination lists—wrapped in a faded pink telegram containing these words: "Won the three miles.—Charlie."

These extracts are often read and carefully replaced; but there is one thing Alice keeps herself, and which she would not part with for anything in the world. She keeps it folded in soft tissue paper, for this is Charlie's "blue"—the blazer he wore that day at Cambridge when she saw him win his race.

BY THE GATES OF THE SEA.

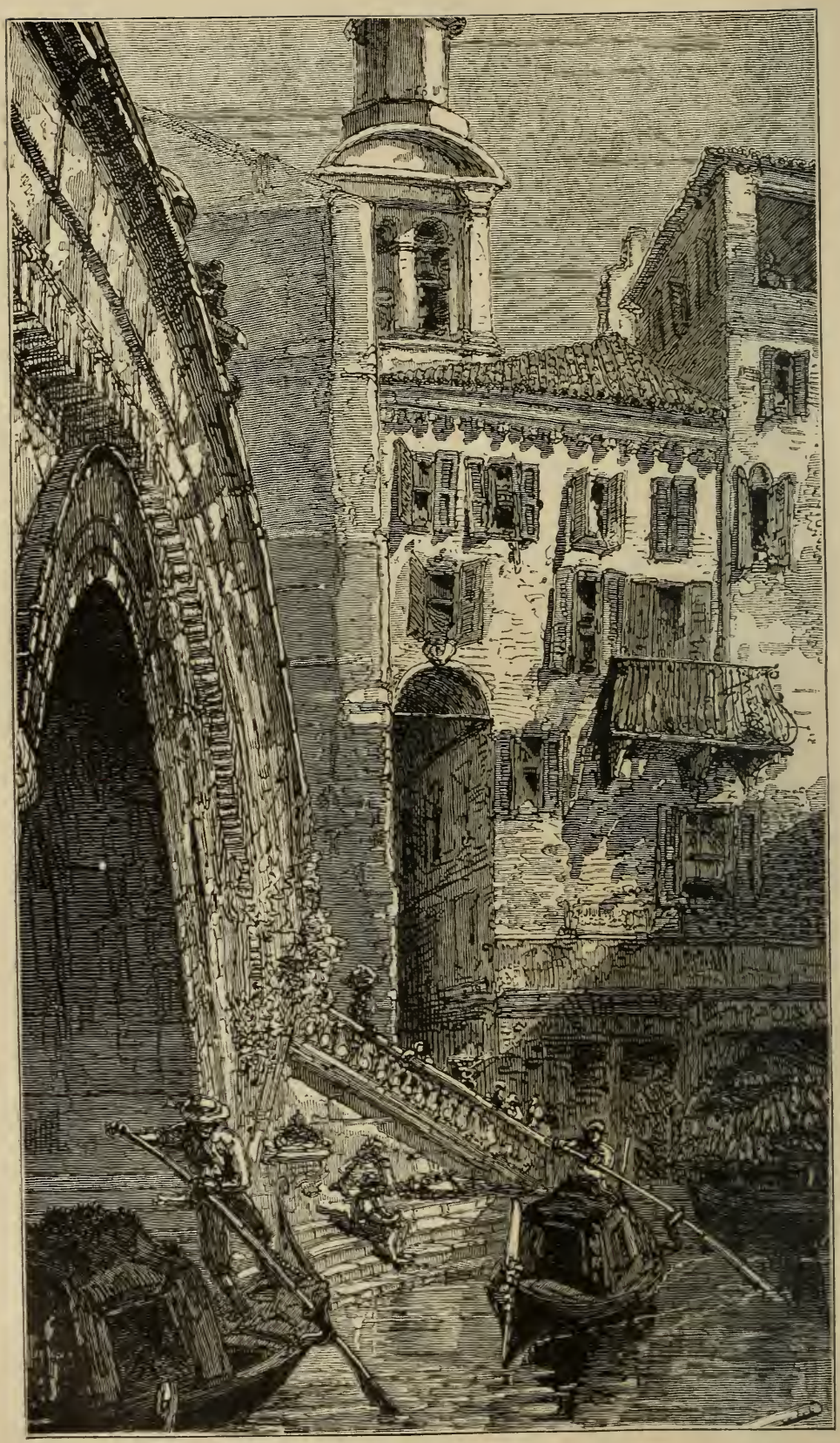
Bright amber bars o'er all the West,
With glow as deep as ruddy ore;
The weary coming home for rest,
And children's laughter from the shore.
The mellow chimes of evening bells,
The ships receding o'er the main;
The tear-dimmed eyes and sad farewells
Which have been and will be again.

A seven years' child upon the sands
Amidst the gold-lipped mystic shells
Which murmur of fair, sunny lands
Where wondrous music ebbs and swells.
With growing joy his eager ear
Hears songs from isles in emerald seas,
And strains of heavenly music clear
Of his life's far-back mysteries.

An agèd man with silvered hair
Gazing into the glowing West
With wistful eyes and yearning prayer
For peace and home and perfect rest;
Slow searching through the years gone by
For some sweet, tender long-lost strain;
And vainly calling with a sigh
On friends who answer not again.

Two children on the shining shore
Amidst their palaces of sand;
Two worn ones by the cottage door —
The open Book of God at hand.
Two lovers happy, loyal, brave,
And knit together for the strife,
Two resting in one peaceful grave—
So thus goes on the round of life!

Alexander Lamont.



PIETRO TURNED THE GONDOLA TO THE RIGHT, AND HALTED AT THE STEPS OF PAOLUCCI'S PALACE.—*Page* 24.

THE

SUMMER NUMBER

OF

THE ARGOSY.

THE COUNSEL OF THE DIPLOMATIST.

I.

IT was in the year 1747. The representative of France at the Republic of San Marco was, at that time a Count Montaign, who, as Captain of the Guards at the Court of the King of France, had won great distinction, and was rewarded by being advanced to the position of ambassador. He filled his brilliant position through the silent dignity of his presence—the duties of the post and all pertaining to them, he deputed to his people, and chiefly to his secretary. The young man, of about thirty years of age, who in the year mentioned held this post, was named Jean Jacques Rousseau.*

It was a clear, winter morning.

The renowned philosopher sat in the great office of the French

* "Sometimes I have ventured upon hazardous undertakings, in many of which I have been successful. I remember one in particular, which makes me laugh yet, when I think of it. One would hardly imagine that it is to me, the lovers of the opera in Paris owe Coralline and her sister Camille; nevertheless it is true."—[*Confessions of J. J. Rousseau.*]

embassy, his back turned towards the fire that scarcely warmed the large hall.

Beside him sat his assistant, the dapper little Abbé de Binis, who was also absorbed in one of the despatches brought in by the last courier.

The door opened, and the ambassador entered.

"My dear Rousseau," said he, "here is yet another despatch. It comes from the Duke de Gesvres, the first chamberlain of the king, and concerns our first soprano."

"Corallina, your excellence?" asked Rousseau, rising.

"The same. You know last autumn Corallina was with her father, Veronese, in Paris. Whilst there she betrothed herself to the singer Aimond, and both father and daughter signed a contract to appear during this winter in the Italian Opera in Paris. Signor Veronese received, in addition, two thousand francs for travelling expenses. Now who should fail to keep the contract but Signor Veronese and his marvellous daughter! The Duke de Gesvres now claims both through our mediation. Adjust that!"

With these words the ambassador threw the despatch upon the table, where the two disciples of the diplomatic corps sat at work, and left the hall again.

"Adjust that!" exclaimed Rousseau, looking after him, indignantly. "As though it were as easy as to swallow an oyster of the *Chioggia!*"

The Abbé Binis laughed. He had been longer accustomed than Rousseau to the manner in which his excellency disposed of despatches.

"To carry off from the Venetians their Corallina!" continued Rousseau.

"She belongs to the troupe of San Luca," said the Abbé, "and the troupe of San Luca belongs to Count Giustiniani, and he most undoubtedly would rather have his own daughter—if he had one—carried off, than his jewel, Corallina!"

"Count Giustiniani being one of the nobility, whose name stands written in the golden book of the Republic, it is impossible for one of us—belonging to a foreign embassy—to deal personally with him."*

"Nothing, therefore, remains," continued the Abbé, "than for you to take refuge in your usual deliverer in need, M. Le Blond!"

M. Le Blond was the French consul, in whose way was not placed the obstacle of intercourse with the nobility. Rousseau determined to apply at once to him. He left Abbé Binis to study out his ciphers, took his cloak and sallied forth to take a gondola that lay at the steps of the palace, and be rowed to M. Le Blond.

M. Le Blond appeared not greatly overjoyed with the commission offered him. However he promised to do his best. The first chamberlain of the King of France was not a man whose commissions

* The patricians of Venice were forbidden, under penalty of severe punishment, all intercourse with the members of the foreign embassies.

could be lightly set aside. Rousseau returned to the palace of the embassy.

After the lapse of an hour, M. Le Blond appeared to make his report.

"Well, have you succeeded in doing anything?" asked Rousseau, eagerly, as he entered the hall.

"I have certainly succeeded in doing something," rejoined M. Le Blond, laughing sarcastically. "I have thrown Signor Giustiniani into a terrible rage—that is one thing; I have succeeded in having Signora Corallina, who, with the rest of the troupe, resides in his palace, guarded as a prisoner; and thirdly, I have awakened within him a most friendly interest for the gentlemen of the French embassy. I can only advise you, M. Rousseau, to let the matter rest for the present; a further persistence might result in very unpleasant consequences for yourself. You know how careful one has to be of these artful Italians where their love-intrigues, and still more where their money-interests, are concerned."

Rousseau turned crimson. The conduct of the patrician—who was openly in the wrong—incensed him. Throughout his whole life, every injustice of which he was obliged to be witness made his blood boil in his veins; yet, after further consideration of the matter, he was obliged to admit that M. Le Blond was right; that there was very little prospect of obtaining anything further; and that nothing could be done but reply to the Duke de Gesvres that Signor Veronese and his daughter were engaged for the winter in the troupe of the *impresario* of San Luca, and that the *impresario* of this theatre was a patrician of high pretensions, one of the great council. There was very little prospect of carrying through the reclamation, unless his majesty would make it an affair of state, and threaten to discharge the galleys of Toulon, and send them before the lagunes of Malomocio.

Rousseau drew up the despatch, the Abbé copied it, Count Montaign signed it, and the affair was—"adjusted." So it appeared, at least. For several weeks nothing more was spoken of it, and Rousseau, whose interest had been excited, inquired further concerning the singer and her *impresario* and tyrant.

At the expiration of this time, as Rousseau one morning entered the hall of the legation, he found the Abbé Binis in conversation with a stranger. The Abbé stood with his back leaning against the mantel-piece. The stranger, a well-formed and elegantly-dressed person, spoke with eager gesticulations. As the latter turned towards Rousseau, he beheld the expressive features of a noble head, with dark, fiery eyes.

"M. Aimond, the first singer of the Italian Opera in Paris," said the Abbé, presenting him.

"Ah!" replied Rousseau, pleasantly surprised by the well-known name—"you are welcome in Venice. You come to make acquaintance with its musical institutes? I pray you be seated."

The Abbé Binis pushed forward a chair, and whilst they were taking their seats, the stranger at once entered upon the reason of his calling. "I am the betrothed of Signora Corallina," said he.

"Ah!" exclaimed Rousseau; "so I heard some time since."

"Signora Corallina," continued the singer, "is engaged for Paris; she is expected there, but she comes not."

"To be sure, to be sure. Duke de Gesvres——"

"The Duke de Gesvres it was who sent me," interrupted the singer. "'Go, Aimond,' he said, 'you are the betrothed, and what our gentlemen of the diplomatic corps in Venice cannot do, the lover can. If there is no other way, carry her off by strategy; we must have Corallina; the king will have her. Come not back without her.'"

"That is easier said than done!" cried the little Abbé, shrugging his shoulders.

"And yet it must be done," continued the singer; "I am firmly resolved not to return without my bride. I must acknowledge to you the espionage and confinement under which Signor Giustiniani dares hold my betrothed renders me uneasy, restless, and indignant——"

"Italian custom," threw in Binis; "an unfortunate creature who gives himself to an *impresario* becomes a slave without will or rights!"

"I know this custom," said Aimond, as the flush of rage rose to his face; "but I think it a matter beyond all custom. When Giustiniani informed me by his secretary yesterday upon announcing myself at his palace that I could only see my betrothed in his presence, I was enraged."

"It is certainly enraging," cried Rousseau; "and this proud Signor merits a chastisement! But how give it to him? He will say, 'The contract Veronese made with me is as good and sound as that he made in the Paris enterprise,' and he will not let Corallina go."

"Then she must be carried off by strategy or force," said Aimond, passionately. "Is, then, Venice, with its masks, its gondolas, its adventures, not the place where——"

"One might execute a *coup de théâtre*," interrupted Rousseau, laughing. "Yet I fear no one will be more prepared for it than Count Giustiniani; and besides, an abduction is a criminal action, to which I cannot give my hand. We must set in another lever, and I believe I have found one. You must marry your betrothed at once. Are you willing to do so?"

"Most assuredly," replied Aimond, laughingly. "If that were possible, I should most happily take leave of Venice!"

"As the husband of the beautiful *prima donna*, you would have to control her actions—not the faithless father; you would then find every resistance of Giustiniani's useless."

"Certainly; but to carry out this plan——?"

"Will be difficult, but not impossible,' said Rousseau, reflectively.

"Have the goodness to let me have your pass; I shall need it. And now do me the honour to breakfast with me under the procuration. We will there meet M. Le Blond, our consul; he will give us some explanations which I yet need, and I think the plan which now lies in my head in embryo will then come to maturity."

II.

It was in the character of our secretary, who displayed so shy and indolent a nature with so little of the practical where his own interests were concerned, when excited, to develop a zeal and pleasure in intrigues entirely foreign, to all appearances, to the rest of his nature. This nature was, however, formed of a mass of contradictions.

So now he pondered with marvellous zeal over a plan to deprive the arrogant and powerful patrician of the pearl of his theatrical enterprise. For the execution of the same, to be sure, he needed a document rather difficult to obtain—the permission of the senate for one of the priests of Venice to marry the Sieur Aimond at once, and without the adjustment of the otherwise necessary legal demands. Such permission was possible, but could only be obtained through very influential persons—members of the senate, or those who stood in equal rank with them. In any case it was impossible to obtain this permission without the danger that Giustiniani, who belonged to the great council, should receive tidings of it.

"In that case," said Rousseau, when Le Blond raised this objection: "in that case Giustiniani himself must furnish the permission!"

"You need not expect that," said Le Blond; "he will be too well on his guard!"

"Yes, yes," rejoined our secretary of legation. "Has Giustiniani ever seen you, M. Aimond?"

"Not with my knowledge."

"So much the better. Be careful, then, not to come under his notice as M. Aimond. Envelop yourself in a complete incognito—you only arrived yesterday, no one has seen your pass—you can do so. From the hasty glance I cast at your pass, you are called Sieur Charles Aimond de Saint Esprée. I will prepare for you a new pass, in which you shall be called simply Sieur Charles de Saint Esprée. No one here will suspect that you are the celebrated M. Aimond, and our nobility will be certainly set at rest on this score."

"And then?" said the singer.

"Then M. Le Blond will introduce you into a few houses, where you will see something of Venetian society. Give yourself the air of a French cavalier, and, above all else, seek the acquaintance of the little Signor Paolucci, who last winter was *impresario* of the San Samuel theatre, who was the competitor of Giustiniani, and was, of

course, heartily hated by him, although both appear to be on friendly footing, as I lately had the opportunity to observe when I saw them pacing up and down together the gallery of the palace of the Doges, and taking from each other's golden snuff-boxes. But you must not only make his acquaintance ; you must also make a conquest of him, which will not be difficult on account of his passion for music. After that you must make a conquest of his daughter. You must, at all events, pay court to her in a pleasing way ; you can sing a duet with her at some evening company. People will speak of your voice, your appearance, your devotion to Signora Lucia, and this will suffice."

"This week there is to be an evening reunion at the Signor Paolucci's, to which I can conduct you," said Le Blond.

"But my betrothed," replied Aimond. "I fear she would suspect my fidelity should she hear of it."

"Corallina lives perfectly secluded in Giustiniani's palace ; she sees only a few members of the troupe. And besides, we must see to furnishing her with a letter from you, in which you give her tidings of our plan and prepare her to hold herself in readiness for its execution."

"If I could only see this plan clearly myself first," interrupted Aimond.

"I believe I have sufficiently discovered it," replied the secretary of legation, laughing. "A suitable personage must apply to Signor Giustiniani for the marriage permission of the French cavalier, Sieur Charles de Saint Esprée. At the same time it must secretly be given to understand that the lady whom you wish to carry off in secret is none other than Signor Paolucci's pretty daughter, Signora Lucia. Do you not believe that Giustiniani would show himself at once zealous to fulfil our wishes? He would otherwise be no Italian."

Le Blond laughed. Aimond exclaimed: "In truth, I came to Venice with the highest esteem for your musical talents, but it is to be hoped I shall have cause to cherish still greater esteem for your diplomatic talents before I depart from Venice, Sir Secretary of Legation."

"I shall do all in my power to justify this good opinion, M. Aimond," was Rousseau's satisfied reply.

III.

The task of playing a *rôle* could not be a difficult one for M. Aimond, the renowned hero of the stage. He was not dilatory in executing what the secretary of the French embassy had prescribed for him, and celebrated such a result as might be expected. His first appearance had taken ; it was the appearance of a man belonging to the best society ; his conversation and his spirit had taken captive every one to whom he was presented, and his attentions to the Signora Lucia

were received by her with a coquetry which proved how welcome they were. The appearance of the French cavalier caused no little sensation, and became the subject of conversation in society, although he appeared to belong to that class of adventurous French nobility, without property and without proper home, who at that time were seeking their luck in the world, and, of course, stood in no great esteem.

M. de Saint Esprée had already been permitted to entertain Signorina Lucia in her box at the opera-house of San Luca. Upon this occasion he was in the house of Signor Paolucci, as it was the day when the saloons of the house were thrown open to company.

There was music during the evening; Lucia had sung an aria from the new opera "Artaxerxes," by Hasse; many compliments had been passed upon her beautiful voice, and then the worth of the new composition was discussed. Aimond, too, had taken part in the theme.

"You speak with such decision of these things, my dear Saint Esprée," the master of the house now remarked, "that I should be ready to pledge my word that you judge music not as one of the laity, but that you exercise it a little yourself!"

"Yes, to be sure, I am somewhat of a *dilettante*," said Aimond, smiling modestly.

"Well, then, give us a proof—execute something yourself," said Paolucci, encouragingly. "You have seen by the applause my daughter won that the company does not consist of inexorable critics."

Paolucci almost forced his guest to the instrument. The latter seated himself, played a prelude, and began a little French people's song.

From the very first note the attention of the whole assembly was fixed upon the foreign "*dilettante*." A universal silence ensued; when Aimond had finished he saw that all present had crowded into the saloon where he was singing, and now they broke out into loud applause.

"But," cried Paolucci, "my dear friend, you have a marvellous tenor. Why did you not let us know it sooner? Oh, I beg of you do not leave the instrument without having given us further proof of this extraordinary voice!"

"You are very kind, Signor Paolucci, and I am ready to oblige."

Aimond seated himself again, and after having played the introduction, began a great heroic aria from an opera of Scarlatti.

Whilst the reverberation of his mighty organ rolled forth, a stream of euphony, bearing the expression of a sublime passion, Signor Paolucci's countenance brightened up as though he were gazing into an open heaven. He trembled, he was beside himself; and when Aimond had ended he embraced him with stormy rapture, whilst all around indulged in an outburst of enthusiastic admiration.

"What a voice!" exclaimed Paolucci. "You are great—greater

than all who work upon our stage. Why do you not entrance the world from the stage?"

"Your praise is extravagant, Signor Paolucci. I could not remotely venture to compete with——"

"With all—with all you could compete," interrupted Paolucci. "You must—you must turn to the stage. I—I, an experienced man in these matters, promise you the most brilliant success, glory, riches. Were I sure of a power like yours, I should begin to-day to build up a troupe for San Samuel, and I should annihilate this artful Giustiniani who has ruined me, and with his Corallina has rendered all competition impossible for this winter. Oh, we should overthrow him with a voice like yours!"

Aimond continued to waive off this enthusiastic praise; in order to escape from it he executed a few songs that rendered the master of the house perfectly enraptured concerning his guest. Aimond had to promise him to come again the following day. Paolucci displayed an intense desire to monopolize the man with this wonderful tenor during his entire stay in Venice.

Aimond did not resist him too violently. He came the next and the following days to the house of Paolucci. He sang, he paid court to Lucia, he listened to the assurances of his host that he only wanted such a voice as that of M. de Saint Esprée to be able to ruin his rival, Giustiniani.

Notwithstanding all this, Aimond felt weighed down with heavy care. He had, upon the day of his arrival, reported himself at the palace of Giustiniani to his betrothed Corallina, and received his reply from Giustiniani himself. Had his announcement reached his betrothed? Or, if such were not the case, had Giustiniani informed Corallina that he was in Venice? He had, to be sure, written to her to announce his enterprise. He had confided the note to Rousseau; but Rousseau had not succeeded in having it reach its address. Upon the stage in San Luca Corallina was watched with Argus eyes; in Giustiniani's palace it was not even possible to bribe a servant to carry a note—and it was necessary to exercise the greatest caution; for if the note should fall into the hands of Giustiniani all were lost.

"I cannot longer endure this uncertainty," said Aimond one morning to Rousseau; "if you do not succeed in having my note reach Corallina to-day, I shall steal behind the scenes of the theatre of San Luca and speak to Corallina in spite of all the Giustinianis in the world."

"And Corallina will receive a shock, will scream out, make a little scene, and betray everything," returned the secretary of legation. "You will let that drop, Monsieur Aimond, or I shall withdraw my aid. If Signor Paolucci raves, as you tell me, about the idea of ruining Giustiniani, with your help let us tell him openly that we wish nothing better. Let us confess to him that we desire to deprive Giustiniani of his *prima donna*, and thus lay claim to his assistance.

He is acquainted with Giustiniani from old times; they exchange visits of ceremony. Paolucci, as former theatre-director, can appear behind the scenes at San Luca without attracting attention; in a bouquet he can hand a note to Corallina——"

"You are right—the thought is admirable," said Aimond, brightening up at once. "Let us set these grasping and revengeful people to play against one another. I will sound Paolucci this very day; give me back my note to Corallina."

"Here it is," rejoined Rousseau, drawing it forth from his pocket. "Success attend you," he added, laughing, as Aimond rose to put his project into execution.

IV.

Aimond left the palace of the embassy without suspecting what scenes were being enacted, at the same moment, in the palace Giustiniani, in the little rehearsal hall.

The music-director of the San Luca theatre sat at the instrument, accompanying two singers, a lady and a gentleman, who stood beside him practising a duet. A half-dozen of the members of the troupe chatted together in the background, and in a window-alcove stood another gentleman and lady; the lady of a medium size, of a neater and more delicate form than is usually seen in Italian beauties. Luxuriant, blue-black hair encircled the even, delicate oval of the face. The brows were daintily arched above the wonderful dark eyes, whose colour was of a soft, velvet-brown, which shone with a clear, gentle light, as though a quiet, enduring peace dwelt in the soul, gazing forth from those sweet, starry eyes. She was in a morning toilette of an airy lightness that tended rather to heighten the freshness of her appearance.

The gentleman who stood before her was apparently in about his fiftieth year. He was tall, thin, his features sharp, his eyes large, but restless; over the whole face was spread the olive complexion of the southerner. He was dressed in powdered periwig, brown coat, with enormous buttons, and black knee-hose; he wore, besides, a little gallant, three-cornered rapier, a three-cornered hat edged with feather galloon; he kept his hat upon his head even while he spoke with the lady.

Yet he spoke with great eagerness to this lady, as though intent upon pleasing her. He talked with that cultivated tone of *naïveté*, combined with the air of unintentional devotion usually so attractive to ladies. Corallina, however, for this was she, seemed little pleased with his conversation; her rosy lips were drawn into a pout, and upon her countenance was an expression of disgust.

"And I shall not sing the *rôle!*" she said, as Signor Giustiniani ceased. "It is too high for my voice, and I have no desire to ruin my voice in your San Luca theatre. I shall require it longer."

"Let us make peace *bellissima*," interrupted the Signor. "De-

termine to sing the *rôle*—to practice it, and I will present you with the brocade robe you need for it! Shall I be forced to apply to your father that he may mix himself in it? You know very well you have no such kind, gentle adviser in him as you find in me. Say yes, Corallina, that I may go. Time presses, and I promised an acquaintance to do him a service in the palace of the signorie. Would it interest you to hear of a little love intrigue? Do you know Signor Lucia Paolucci?"

Giustiniani had in saying this hushed his voice to the softest whisper.

Corallina listened.

"She has been pointed out to me in her box at the theatre," she replied; "for the past few evenings I have from time to time seen a gentleman appear in her box, who——"

"Who? Why do you not finish?"

"Who seems known to me," rejoined Corallina, hesitatingly.

"And how can you know him?"

"I only said he seems to be known to me. He avoids very perceptibly turning his face to the stage—at least when I am engaged upon the stage. Yet, I may be entirely mistaken."

Corallina would have turned away and dropped the conversation, but Giustiniani laid his hand upon her arm. "This is the very gentleman concerned. Listen," he whispered further. "He is a French cavalier—one of those braggadocios with whom France stocks the courts of our happy city of Venice. He is said to have a beautiful voice. Signor Paolucci raves about him, and still more the Signor's merry daughter, it seems; for to-day the French consul came to me for a marriage license for this Monsieur. He designs secretly marrying one of the beautiful daughters of our Queen of the Sea, and carrying her off."

"What! Lucia Paolucci?" exclaimed Corallina.

"Hush, hush, child!—not so loud. No one must know it is she—myself least of all."

Giustiniani smiled with his whole evil face.

"And what is the name of this Frenchman?" asked Corallina, excitedly, whispering now as softly as the Signor, although the sound of the music rendered it impossible for their conversation to be overheard.

"What he is called? That I cannot exactly tell you; but I must have his passport about me. You can see from it."

Signor Giustiniani drew forth the pass, unfolded it, and handed it to Corallina.

She glanced into it. Suddenly she uttered a half shriek, dropped the paper, and, whilst a deadly pallor overspread her usually rosy face, she stared wildly at the man standing before her.

"For mercy's sake, you are deceiving me! This man will marry the daughter of Pao——"

Giustiniani's hand was over her mouth.

"By San Marco," he whispered, "do not scream it out into the world! What is the matter with you?"

"You ask me that? Do you know who this Frenchman is?"

"Why—how should I know?"

"He is Aimond, my betrothed—the great Aimond——"

"It is not possible!"

"I tell you it is!" exclaimed Corallina. "Aimond's full name is Charles Aimond de Saint Esprée. Oh, the faithless traitor!"

Corallina's otherwise so gentle, brown, dove-eyes now flashed with an expression of rage, her hands trembled, her whole form quivered. "The wretch! Therefore it was he concealed himself so carefully in the background of Paolucci's box. He was hiding from me. I was not to suspect that he was in Venice!"

Giustiniani had meanwhile gathered up the passport from the floor, and was meditatively stroking his chin with it. There was nothing in Corallina's assertion that could greatly surprise him. He knew that Aimond was in Venice. He had announced himself at his palace, and had then not been heard from again. Alarmed lest he had come to deprive him of Corallina, Giustiniani had awaited his return without apprising Corallina of his presence. It was time enough for this when the Signor should make his appearance again, and insist upon an interview with Corallina. But he had not come again. Giustiniani had perceived nothing of the secret efforts of the Frenchman to approach his betrothed. He had satisfied himself that Signor Aimond had found Corallina too well guarded, and had given up the design of carrying her off to Paris, in case he had come to Venice with that view.

So thought Giustiniani. Until now it was clear to him that the singer had disappeared so abruptly from quite different reasons. He had found another flame; he had forgotten his singer; he had made the conquest of a Venetian lady of a wealthy and distinguished house. She it was he would now carry off. The Frenchman was no fool. This would pay better for the trouble—a Paolucci and a princess of the boards. The choice between the two could not be hard!

A smile of inward satisfaction glided over his features.

"*Il Traditore!*" he exclaimed, with tragic pathos. "He has forgotten you, the villain!"

"But you, Signor—you will not grant him the license of which you speak? Never!"

"Despise him, Corallina, and let him marry whom he will."

"No, no; if you will not have me rush to him and strike him dead in my anger——"

"That I most assuredly will not. You shall do nothing unworthy of yourself; you shall make no effort to seek him out—to write to him. I will not have it so; I will prevent it in every way," said Giustiniani, sternly.

"Well, then, promise me you will not grant him that permission,

and that you will see that no one else in the palace of the signorie grants it."

Giustiniani was silent.

"Promise it to me," persisted Corallina.

"Will you, then, undertake the *rôle* we were speaking of?"

"Any *rôle* you wish."

"Good! Give me your hand on it. I promise it to you."

Corallina gave him her hand.

"I have your promise—your solemn word!" she said.

"You say it! It is done. Get the *maestro* to give you your part. I must go. *Addio, cara mia!*"

Giustiniani bowed to her, greeted, in passing, the group at the piano with a movement of his hand, raised his hat to the members of his theatre in the middle of the saloon—amongst them Veronese and Camilla—Corallina's father and sister—passed by and disappeared.

Two minutes later he rested in the black cushions of his gondola, and glided with arrow-like speed towards the palace of the signorie. A malicious smile played about his lips.

"Matters are taking an admirable turn," he said to himself "Monsieur Aimond leaves his betrothed and absconds with Signora Lucia. Signora Corallina, on her part, will not think of going to Paris her life long, where she will meet her faithless lover—perhaps have to sing love duets with him—admirable! I shall take good heed that he does not have to wait too long for the desired license. It shall be ready to-day, or I am not one of the nobility!"

Corallina had, meanwhile, left the music-room. She had fled to her own apartment in the palace to conceal her emotion—to be alone with her thoughts of rage, of revenge, of despair. She could not doubt the truth of Giustiniani's words. Had she not seen Aimond with her own eyes in Lucia's box? And wherefore did he not come to her—the false one. He was in Venice and did not trouble himself about her. Giustiniani might watch her—might intercept her letters. He surely could not deny admission to Aimond, her betrothed, if he openly acknowledged himself!

And what was now to be done? Should she depend upon Giustiniani's promise that he would prevent the connection? Was it possible for her to sit still with her hands in her lap? No—Corallina was firmly resolved. She wrote a letter to Paolucci in which she developed the plot that was forming against him. The letter she concealed about her person to send it privately as soon as possible.

V.

Aimond was pleasantly surprised the next morning when he entered the office, and was accosted by Rousseau, with the words—"You come just at the right moment, M. Aimond. A quarter of an hour

ago our excellent consul was here to bring the marriage license. Signor Giustiniani sent it early this morning. Here it is complete, signed by two members of the signorie, and sealed with the winged lion of San Marco. You have to pay for it at least ten sequins, and one for the messenger, besides twenty-nine livres."

Aimond eagerly seized the document, and paid down the required sum.

"Have you spoken with Paolucci?" continued Rousseau.

"Not yet. He was not at home yesterday when I called; but it is time enough."

"Certainly; but it should not be delayed longer. And if you obtain a favourable answer from him, apply at once to the priest of Santa Maria della Salute. The church lies in the vicinity, and the priest is said to be a man with whom one easily comes to an understanding when one lays claim to his services in such matters. So Le Blond tells me. To be sure, you must not spare your sequins."

"Good," rejoined Aimond; "and I think you will not refuse me the favour of accompanying me as witness. As witness and bride's-maid for Corallina, I hope to win Signora Lucia."

"Are you so sure Signora Lucia will give her approbation to this union?"

"I have not the slightest doubt of it," said Aimond.

"Well, try your luck—who knows? But then you will not be able to avail yourself of my services. I dare not undertake such a position with Signora Paolucci, for Paolucci belongs to the nobility, and we of the legations are separated from these people by an impassable barrier. If, however, you were to take Le Blond in my place, he would doubtless have no objections. I then could be in the church as spectator."

Aimond was satisfied to take the consul in the stead of the secretary of legation, and took leave, after assuring Rousseau of his gratitude to visit Paolucci.

Signor Paolucci was always at home to M. de Saint Esprée. When Aimond was ushered in, he found the lively old gentleman stretched upon an ottoman sipping ice-water, and from time to time interrupting a *dolce far niente* by taking up a volume of the memoirs of Goldoni, reading a few pages, and then casting the book down to gaze upwards at the painted ceiling of his apartment. Aimond's appearance at an hour which in Venice, where there is more life in the night than in the day, was unwontedly early, caused him to look up in surprise.

"Ah, Monsieur de Saint Esprée," he exclaimed, half rising, "you look as though something important brought you here!"

"Which is indeed the case, Signor Paolucci," rejoined Aimond.

"What brings you then?" continued the Italian, pointing to a seat.

Aimond took it and replied—"I come to make an acknowledgment—an acknowledgment which the most perfect confidence one can have in a man's goodness leads me to make to you."

"An acknowledgment?" echoed Paolucci, sitting up erect and betraying no little alarm in his features. "I am not inquisitive, M. de Saint Esprée, and there is something dangerous in making acknowledgments that are unsought for."

"That may be the case," continued Aimond; "but I feel impelled to be open with you. You have received me with so much unmerited kindness and courtesy, have opened your house to me with such confidence, have drawn me into the circle of your friends, have made my sojourn in Venice so much of a *fête*—it would be inexcusable, it would be shameful were I to continue further to deceive you!"

"Ah! you have hitherto deceived me?" exclaimed Paolucci, with great irritation; adding mentally: "He has made Lucia the object of his desires, and will now come out with a declaration—the bold adventurer!"

"I have deceived you," continued Aimond; "but in ceasing to do so, and making my acknowledgment to you, I must count upon your secrecy. Can I do so?"

"My secrecy? I do not know how you could doubt it. Indiscretion is the last fault with which we Venetians can be charged, I should think!"

"I have, then, your word?"

"The word of a *nobile!*"

"Well, then, listen: I am not what I have allowed myself to appear to you. I am Aimond, the first tenor of the Italian Opera in Paris!"

"Ah, indeed!" exclaimed Signor Paolucci, highly surprised. "And do you believe you will, therefore, be less welcome to me, that you make so much of the acknowledgment?"

"No; but my acknowledgment is not yet at an end."

"No?" said Paolucci, a little anxiously.

"I am come to Venice," continued Aimond, "for a particular design. I wish to carry away home with me a wife."

"Signor Aimond," exclaimed Paolucci in alarm, "of what use can it be to you to make acknowledgments to me in a matter in which it is impossible, I say wholly impossible, I can be interested?"

"Yet, I beseech you, let me proceed. Last autumn Signor Veronese, with his daughter Corallina, visited Paris. Corallina won my heart, and I offered her my hand; she accepted it and became my betrothed——"

"Ah, Corallina!" exclaimed Paolucci, as though electrified. "It concerns Corallina?"

"None other."

"Admirable, admirable!" said Paolucci, from whose heart a stone seemed to have suddenly been lifted, and who now betrayed the greatest eagerness concerning Aimond's acknowledgment. "Go on."

"Corallina became my betrothed. Veronese made us both conclude a contract with the management of our Italian Opera in Paris to appear together during the winter. At the same time, about the New

Year, our marriage was to take place. Returned to Venice, however, Signor Veronese forgets his obligations, renews his engagement with Giustiniani, and no warning to Veronese, no reclamation addressed to Giustiniani avails me."

"Yes, I believe so," interrupted Paolucci, laughing.

"The reclamations," proceeded Aimond, "have only served to render Giustiniani suspicious. He guards Corallina prisoner in his palace, and watches her as a dragon his treasure."

"He is a tyrant, a monster, capable of everything!" exclaimed Paolucci. "Oh, I know him!"

"Well," continued Aimond, "as matters stand thus, I have resolved to be secretly married to Corallina behind Giustiniani's back. Once my wife, she must follow me; no one in the world dare come between her and me. Veronese's authority over her ceases."

"Marry her!" exclaimed Paolucci. "But how will you bring it about?"

"I have the marriage license here in my pocket; by virtue of it I can be married by any priest in Venice without further delay. The only obstacle is that I have yet failed to open a safe communication with Corallina; it has not been possible to find any one to whom I could safely intrust a message. And yet it is high time she should learn my designs, and let me know when it would be possible to escape from Giustiniani's palace, just for half an hour, that we might go to the church of Santa Maria della Salute."

"Are you sure of her consent?"

"I do not doubt it a moment, if we could only find means of communicating with her either personally or by letter. And this, Signor Paolucci, leads me to you. If you would only take pity upon me in this dilemma. You know Giustiniani's palace; you can visit the theatre during the rehearsals; the opportunity of speaking to Corallina would so easily offer."

"Ah!" exclaimed Paolucci, surprised. "You prepare for me a fine *rôle*, by San Marco, my dear Aimond! What are you thinking about?"

"That you will take pity on my necessity, and assist me in delivering a victim from the violence of Giustiniani."

"And I shall defy the violence of Giustiniani—I, an old, weak man? No, no, M. de Saint Esprée—M. Aimond, I should say—do not ask me to do anything that makes me tremble!"

"Then I feel perfectly helpless," said Aimond. "And if you have at least no advice to give me, no suggestion to make——"

"A suggestion?" said the Italian meditatively. Cowardice and the desire to play Giustiniani a trick which must so painfully affect him, seemed to struggle for precedence within him for a moment. Finally the latter seemed to gain the upper hand; he replied, hesitatingly: "I might do something for you. The prompter of San Luca theatre was formerly in my service. I had an opportunity to place

him under obligations to me, and I believe he is entirely devoted to me. He cannot fail to find an opportunity of speaking with Corallina. I will have the man sent for to-day; he is in frequent intercourse with my servants, so that it can be done without exciting remark. I will tell him that a friend of mine requires his services, and will send him to you. He shall come to-night, after the representation in San Luca. You shall speak with him yourself. Whether he can fulfil your desires I cannot say; but I can warrant his silence."

"You will render me eternally your slave, Signor Paolucci."

"I hope from the bottom of my heart your plan may succeed, Signor Aimond; and I think this fox Castruccio is your man."

"Let us hope so," said Aimond. "And should it succeed, will your kindness extend so far as to permit the Signora Lucia to be present as Corallina's bridesmaid and witness of the ceremony? I know of no lady in Venice upon whom I could count for so much kindness."

"My daughter Lucia!" exclaimed Paolucci, uneasily. "I should not be without anxiety regarding that——"

"But the wedding shall be at night, and in all secrecy, and who will know Signora Lucia under the mask she will wear?"

"Well, yes," rejoined the Italian; "I have no objections. Settle it yourself with my daughter."

"I thank you with my whole heart, Signor Paolucci!" exclaimed Aimond, springing up to shake the old gentleman's hand. "Dare I announce myself to Signora Lucia?" he asked.

"I will lead the way to her myself," rejoined Paolucci, who now arose to precede Aimond with little tripping steps to his daughter's apartments.

Half an hour later, Aimond left Paolucci's palace with a very satisfied mien to row over to the church. With the priest of Santa Maria della Salute, he met also with no obstacles; after an interview of a quarter of an hour, he left him with the same expression of joyful excitement upon his features, and was rowed over to his own quarters to await there the appearance of the prompter.

VI.

It was about eleven o'clock when Signor Cesare Castruccio, the prompter of the San Luca theatre, was ushered into Aimond's apartments. He was a tall, thin man, with a long, furrowed face, and an expression which did not at first incline Aimond to bestow his confidence upon him. But Paolucci had vouched for his integrity. Aimond had no choice. He ventured to give him his entire confidence.

"So, then, Signor Castruccio," he said, in conclusion, "will you

serve me? I need not tell you I am ready to pay any price you choose to set upon your services."

The Italian made a deprecatory gesture with his hand, and nodded his head as though in deep thought.

"You ask a great deal, Signor Aimond. Were it discovered that Cesare Castruccio lent a hand to it, I should lose my place; and I have a family, signor—wife and children—three—no, four children; the youngest is three days old."

"How shall it be discovered? Signora Corallina surely will be as little likely as I to betray you if you carry her a letter from me and bring an answer."

Castruccio repeated the movement of his hand, and slyly wagged his head.

"Letters?" he said. "Letters are dangerous; they are lost, are found again, fall into the wrong hands. With a letter to Signora Corallina, little is gained for you; you must have the signora herself, and therein lies the difficulty."

"Undoubtedly that is the difficulty that is to be overcome. Giustiniani's espionage must be cheated; Corallina must find means of escaping from the palace for an hour. I have supposed it would be possible after a representation at San Luca. Provided with a mask, she can glide into another gondola instead of the one awaiting her—dart away from the throng of gondolas at the theatre door to the church."

Castruccio made violent gesticulations of disapproval. "It may succeed," he said, eagerly, "but also it may fail. Corallina would have to fear not only her *duenna*, but also her sister Camilla, who always goes home with her in the theatre-gondola; sisters are proverbial for suspecting and controlling one another. Then old Veronese and the rest of the singers would be there; it would be a miracle were the signora to escape."

"And what would you advise, Castruccio?"

"It depends entirely upon whether your preliminary efforts have succeeded. Have they done so, the affair is all right. It is all right if it can be executed to-morrow. Then is Cesare Castruccio the man to aid you."

"To-morrow? There is no obstacle in the world."

"Well, then, listen. I told you that my youngest child, a girl, is three days old. The child is to be christened to-morrow afternoon. I have bespoken Signora Corallina, my patroness, my benefactress, to stand as godmother. She is an angel for us poor folks about the theatre. Were it not for that spiteful old Veronese, she would give nearly all she makes to help a poor family when they are in need. Signora Corallina will be at my house about five o'clock; Signor Veronese will accompany her. We will drive to San Stephano for the christening; we will return to my house to have a little festival; we will then drug Veronese's wine; and, when the hour comes, we will

drive to Santa Maria della Salute, Signora Corallina and I. This is what I can undertake, Signor Francese; the rest is your affair. Are you satisfied?"

"Perfectly," exclaimed Aimond, delighted—"perfectly! In all Venice, Signor Castruccio, I could not find another man like you! How shall I reward you?"

"Good deeds reward themselves," said the Italian, laughing. "I consider it a good deed to bring together a devoted pair such as you and Signora Corallina. But I fear it is no good deed to deceive my employer, this Giustiniani. For this part of the affair the reward must come from you, signor. You can make a present to my little one. I am convinced that a gentleman like the Signor Francese will not spend less than a hundred sequins upon the man to whom he owes his happiness."

"Good, good," rejoined Aimond, moving laughingly towards his desk. "Take half of the sum on account. You will be able to procure the good *Cyprus* that you must set before Signor Veronese."

The Italian patted the coin with an air of supreme satisfaction.

"Do not be uneasy upon that score," said he, laughing; "the wine shall be good and the drug potent. So, then, farewell until our next meeting, Signor Francese. What hour do you appoint?"

"About eleven o'clock. Is that too early?"

"Rather too late. Giustiniani might grow alarmed if the signora were out so late, and surprise us. Let it be ten o'clock."

"Well, then, ten o'clock. At ten o'clock I shall expect you and Signora Corallina at the church of Santa Maria della Salute."

"You may depend upon me."

The Italian took his departure. That night joyful expectation drove slumber from Aimond's eyes. Early next morning he wrote a note to Signor Paolucci. He thanked him for suggesting so admirable an assistant, told him that his wedding would take place at ten o'clock, and requested him to announce it to Signora Lucia; depending upon the signora's kind promise, he would be at Signor Paolucci's house about half-past nine to wait upon the signora to the church.

Then Aimond hastened to the priest of Santa Maria, and, after making arrangements with the reverend gentleman, he went to the hotel of the French legation to announce his success to Rousseau, who congratulated him heartily, and repeated his promise to be present in the church at ten o'clock.

VII.

About the hour of Aimond's visit to Rousseau, Signor Paolucci lay stretched once more upon the ottoman in his sleeping apartment, the *Mémoires* of Goldoni in his hand, but his mind less absorbed in them than it had been the previous day. The wandering thoughts which yesterday had distracted his attention had to-day a definite object—an

object upon which they lingered with much satisfaction. He thought of Giustiniani's anger, rage, and despair when he discovered that he had been deceived about his Corallina—that she was for ever lost to him—and thought that he, Paolucci, had lent his hand to humble the proud *nobile*, and was yet sure that his complicity could never be discovered. Signor Paolucci was in a most happy mood, and a smile played about his mouth. The dread that an attachment was springing up between his daughter and the French singer was now wholly lifted from his heart; he had himself been witness of how his daughter had received Aimond's announcement. She had appeared excited, but only with womanly interest in such matters, and had readily promised the little service Aimond required of her.

A servant entered, carrying two notes for the *nobile*.

"Who brought them, Domenico?" he asked, examining the addresses.

"One comes from Stella d'Oro; the other was left here by a servant from San Luca theatre. He said it was very important and must be given to you at once."

"Ah!" exclaimed Paolucci. "It is from Castruccio," he added to himself. "You can go, Domenico. Let us see what the Frenchman writes."

Whilst the servant was leaving the room, Paolucci broke open Aimond's note and read it through with perfect satisfaction.

"All goes well," he said. "Let me carry this news to Lucia. But let us see first what this Castruccio has to say."

He broke open the second note. It was not from Cesare Castruccio; it had a quite different signature, and truly none other than Corallina Veronese.

"*Demonio!* What is this?" exclaimed Paolucci, springing up.

He read the words:—

"SIGNORE,—It is designed to deceive you in an unworthy and cruel manner. M. de Saint Esprée, to whom you have opened your house, is not what he represents himself to be; he is an opera singer from Paris who designs secretly marrying your daughter Lucia. Signor Giustiniani, who is delighted to see you outwitted, has furnished him with a marriage license, of which immediate use is to be made in one of the churches of Venice. So beware! As I have no reason to hide from you from whom this warning comes, I subscribe myself,

"CORALLINA VERONESE."

If Signor Paolucci had been suddenly stung by an adder, if lightning had struck him to the earth, he could not have been more horrified and alarmed than now, after reading these lines. His hands trembled, his face grew pale, then was overspread with the flush of violent passion.

"By San Marco! By all the saints! This is shameful! To deceive me so; and make sport of me, too, by appearing to give me

his confidence into the bargain! It is beyond belief—it is unexampled! Corallina herself writes to me. She does not say a word of Aimond being her betrothed. She must know. Demonio! How shall I undertake to punish this French swindler? Fool that I was to believe such a man should take a singer when brought into contact with the daughter of one of the *nobile*. Fool that I was—fool that I was! But I will be revenged! Lucia I shall send into a convent for a year. The hypocrite—the snake! How well she played her *rôle* of the astonished, sympathising friend. But this Frenchman—what shall I do to this Frenchman to show him that he must seek the outwitted father in comedy, not in the house of Gennaro Paolucci? What shall I do to him?"

The enraged little man excitedly paced his floor.

"Why do I reflect longer?" he continued. "It is a crime, simply a criminal action, to carry off a woman this way! And the daughter of one of the *nobile*, besides! He shall be brought to justice, the scamp! He shall be thrown into prison! To the *Pozzi* with him! I will go to Signor Moriani. Moriani shall send his *sbirri* after him. He will come here about ten o'clock after Lucia. Oh, let him come; he will meet the gondola with the *sbirri* at my steps, all ready to receive him!"

Paolucci rang the silver bell on the table with violence, and as Domenico hastened in, he exclaimed—"My wig, my sword, my coat—quickly! Let the gondolier make ready; I am going to signor—what does it matter to you where I am going? Rush! And, listen, let no one be admitted to the signora—no one. Do you understand? If a note comes for her, bring it to me. Be on your guard, or I will dismiss you from my service."

VIII.

It was evening. Signor Cesare Castruccio's humble dwelling in the vicinity of Campo San Stefano was brilliantly illuminated; the floor of the sitting-room was strewn with greens; the table in the middle of the room groaned with its abundance of refreshments; scattered all around, a quantity of long-necked, straw-covered bottles, surrounded with cut-glass goblets of delicate and artistic forms, for whose manufacture Venice was celebrated at that time. A motley, gay and merry assembly sat around this table and two smaller ones a little aside. Signor Cesare's brothers were there, his brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law; there were members of the San Luca theatre, and then Veronese, and also Corallina and her sister Camilla. Cesare Castruccio was no niggard where a family festival was concerned; he had invited whoever came in his way, without a care.

All were merry. They talked, laughed and gesticulated, and drank as much as possible of the sweet, fiery wine of which the host

was to-day so prodigal. One being alone in this merry assembly was silent, and this being was Corallina. Not that she seemed oppressed by any care or sorrow; on the contrary, there was an expression of inward satisfaction upon her face; her dark eyes shone in strange brilliancy when from time to time they met those of Castruccio; but she was silent amidst the gaiety, she entered into no conversation, she gave confused answers when any remarks were addressed to her, and she sat retired in a corner behind the table.

As he had led her upstairs to see the mother, Castruccio had whispered a few hasty words to her upon the dark stairway. An exciting conversation had ensued, and from that moment the whole manner of the singer was changed. She looked ten times more beautiful from this moment forth than she had ever done in her proudest princely robes upon the stage.

And there was yet another guest there, in whom a few words from Castruccio had produced a marvellous transformation. This was Signor Paolucci. He had come, after having a violent outburst with his daughter. Lucia had been so terrified at the violence of his passion, that at first she could find no words to reply; then, amidst tears and invocations to all the saints in Heaven, she had made so touching a defence that Paolucci's mind became gradually dazed. Bewildered by the torrent of words Lucia heaped upon him, he determined to take refuge in Castruccio. He could talk the matter over with Castruccio, learn from him what Aimond had said, and how the matter now stood. He sent for Castruccio, and received word in answer that he could not come, as he was holding a family festival at his house. Greatly disappointed, he determined to set his mind at ease by going himself to Castruccio. The latter was highly flattered at the arrival of the distinguished signor; he hastened out to receive him, and led him into the house, but Paolucci listened very quietly to his words of welcome—took Castruccio by the sleeve, and led him aside.

"Castruccio, I do not come on account of your festival; there is a weight upon my heart that leads me here. Say, what has this Frenchman said to you, and what do you think of his purpose? Be honest and true to me, Castruccio."

"Signor," rejoined Castruccio, "was I ever otherwise towards you? Towards you, my old patron, my benefactor, my——"

"Let good enough alone, Castruccio, and give me answer to my question."

"What anxiety can you have about this Signor Francese? He will do nothing that is wrong to you, to his betrothed, or to Giustiniani—for that man wants to marry his betrothed."

"His betrothed? And do you really believe this whole secret marriage concerns Corallina?"

"And who else should it concern? Everything is in readiness. The marriage is to take place at ten o'clock, at Santa Maria."

"Is that really so?" asked Paolucci, a weight falling from his heart. "But explain, then," he continued, "wherefore Corallina wrote to me——"

"I can explain nothing more," said Castruccio, interrupting him; "but the signora can do so. Come in and speak with her, Signor Paolucci; and then do not think of going until you have rendered my little festival brilliant and memorable by remaining. I beg of you, signor, come in!"

Signor Paolucci was far too curious to speak with the singer to think of declining the invitation. He came in, mingled amongst the guests, was presented to the prima donna, seated himself beside her at the table, and not a quarter of an hour had passed before he had found an opportunity of exchanging with her a few whispered words that set his anxiety to rest. Corallina explained to him the cause of her letter, and how wrong she had been to write to him, how foolish she was to have doubted for a moment Aimond's fidelity, and how excited yet happy she now was; how Castruccio had assured her that all would go right, and how she rejoiced to escape from the power of her tyrant and her father, and to be able to thank her lover for her freedom. In short, Corallina, who had been so silent through the evening, regained her eloquence with Paolucci, and her face glowed with excitement.

Paolucci's face beamed, too, with delight; it beamed also from the effects of the excellent wine that Castruccio poured out for him, and in his excitement neither he nor Corallina observed that Signor Veronese, a tall, thin man, with a pale, green-yellow face, stood closely scrutinizing them for awhile, then suddenly disappeared behind a group of guests. They did not imagine what surprise this disappearance of Veronese's would soon prepare for them.

A quarter of an hour passed, when suddenly an excitement arose below on the entrance of a new guest. Corallina looked up and saw, to her indescribable alarm, above the low-bowed heads, the hateful face of Giustiniani.

Even Paolucci changed colour. "Giustiniani!" he exclaimed.

"In the name of the Madonna, whence does it come? Are we betrayed?" whispered Corallina.

Before Paolucci had time to recover, Giustiniani advanced smilingly to him. "I heard what a distinguished company was assembled for the festival," he said; "how are you, Signor Paolucci? If you and our Corallina will not be disturbed by my society, I shall take place beside you at the table."

Paolucci had risen to his feet; he was profuse in his assurances of delight at the appearance of the honoured signor; Castruccio melted into ecstacy at the honour done his house, his *cara moglie*, his *bambino*, and his friends; but Corallina saw how the moisture stood in great drops upon his brow, and this token of his alarm increased her own tenfold. The stolen glance Castruccio bestowed upon her

she did not understand—was it encouraging or otherwise? she could not tell; she sat there pale and motionless, and watched, in a bewildered way, how Castruccio troubled himself about his newly-arrived guest; how he brought in the best refreshments, and filled up a great glass of gold-sparkling liquid. The two *nobiles* fell to and drank; Castruccio filled the glasses again—the wine must have been agreeable to both, especially to Paolucci, who seemed to have better understood a sly glance from Castruccio than Corallina had done. Paolucci drank and praised the wine, turned the conversation to the San Luca theatre, and praised its success; and finally brought the proud and highly-flattered *nobile* into such a good humour that he did not perceive how often Castruccio filled up his glass.

After a time Giustiniani sprang up. "Where is Veronese?" he exclaimed. "He must drink with me to the health of the child. Here, Veronese!"

With that he seized a glass, and before Veronese had given heed to his cry, Giustiniani had reached the end of the long table where he sat, and whispered to him: "You are a fool, Veronese, with your suspicions."

He turned quickly away, and began to chat anew with Paolucci.

Thus passed away an hour; the zealous dialogue between the two gentlemen began to grow richer in words and poorer in logic, when suddenly the clock in the San Marco place began to strike; the giant next it let its hammer fall nine times, and the other church clocks through the city took up the strokes one after the other, until the noise penetrated into Castruccio's house. Giustiniani drew forth his watch, and made a movement to depart. If agreeable to Corallina, he would take her home in his gondola, he said. Against this Paolucci protested loudly. Giustiniani must empty one more glass first. And thus persuaded, the latter sank back in his chair, and for the time put aside all thoughts of returning home. It might have been a quarter of an hour before, amidst the thoughts that were passing confusedly through his brain, he thought of it again.

"Now, come, Paolucci!" he exclaimed, laughing. "Or, if you will not come, remain as long as you will—I shall go! Veronese, Corallina, come!"

"Let us have the honour of your presence until Signora Corallina has said good-night to my wife and to her little god-child," said Castruccio.

Signora Corallina sprang hastily up.

"Allow me to wait upon you," exclaimed Castruccio, turning towards her, and hastening with her from the room.

Paolucci drew Giustiniani down upon his chair again.

"I never knew you were such a wine-bibber, Paolucci," said the latter; "but Castruccio's wine is good—very good. Veronese, it was a great notion of yours. But where is Veronese? Under the table; undoubtedly under the table."

Giustiniani could not have seen very clearly. Veronese was not *under* but on the table, his head resting upon his arms, muttering in his sleep that Castruccio had poisoned him, had given him of wine to kill him.

Giustiniani listened. "Where is Castruccio?" he exclaimed.

"Here I am, signor," replied Castruccio, who had just crept in. "Here, signor, do not listen to him; he is wholly out of his senses."

"Out of his senses—out of his senses! I fear there is not much left in the whole company," stammered Giustiniani. "I will go. Castruccio, call Corallina. Into my gondola with her. Go, brave Castruccio—so long as this Frenchman is in Venice—but there is Paolucci, my worthy friend Paolucci. Be seated, Paolucci; you are not needed at home; drink more of this good wine. Don't trouble yourself about headache—ha, ha, ha!"

"Headache for me? I think you will have headache, old villain, and all Venice will laugh at you with your headache!" cried Paolucci, in whom the wine had brewed the old hatred to Giustiniani.

"Old Shylock," continued Giustiniani, rubbing his hands, "how you will cry, 'My daughter, my ducats!'"

"My daughter? What ails my daughter? My daughter is in Santa Maria, and—is helping trick you."

At these words Giustiniani changed colour. His intoxication was gone. "In Santa Maria—to play me a trick?" he said, softly; then shrieked aloud: "Corallina, where is Corallina? Does this besotted wine-bibber speak the truth? Then Heaven help me! Corallina!"

"She is up-stairs, signor—she is up-stairs," said Castruccio in a pacifying tone, placing himself in front of Giustiniani.

"Away with you. You are a rascal, Castruccio," shrieked Giustiniani, hurling him aside; and in so doing he rushed from the house, down the steps to where lay his gondola.

"He, Pietro, seize your rudder!"

"Yes, signor," replied Pietro from the gondola. "Take my hand!"

Giustiniani had already sprung into the gondola.

"Away, away to Santa Maria della Salute! Have you seen a donna pass that way?"

"Several gondolas have moved off with guests!"

"Have you recognised Corallina?"

The gondolier had recognised no one; it was dark, and the ladies wore half masks on their return home to protect them from the night air.

Giustiniani began to grow calm so soon as the night air had cooled his head. "After all, it would have been better to have learned if Corallina were not really up-stairs," he said to himself. "This drunken Paolucci has given me an unnecessary fright. I will laugh when it is told in Venice to-morrow—but is not this Paolucci's

house?" he continued, as the gondolier rowed out of the narrow riga on which Castruccio's house lay into the canale grande. Here I can see at once if Lucia sits calmly at home, or if she is in the church with this accursed Frenchman. Ho, Pietro, hold to the right; lay to at Paolucci's house; I must go in."

Pietro turned the gondola to the right, and halted at the steps of Paolucci's palace. Giustiniani sprang out and went up the steps. From the shadow of the piazza pillars two men sprang out at him.

"Whither?" said one, laconically.

"Whither?" replied Giustiniani, taking him for a servant; "to the signorina—to the Signora Lucia. I will see whether——"

"You will not see the signorina, but you will follow us," replied the man. "Come."

With these words he clapped his hands, and in a moment a great gondola shot out of the darkness, thrust aside Giustiniani's boat, and moored at the steps.

"Step in," said the man nearest Giustiniani, seizing him by the arm.

"In there? What for? Who are you?"

"We are of the *sbirri*, signor, and have orders to arrest you."

"Me—to arrest me?"

"From Signor Moriani, in the name of the Council of Ten."

"By San Marco! Do you know who I am?"

"No; it is of no interest to us. Come!"

"You will arrest me—me, the *nobile* Giustiniani?"

"Come, signor, that we are not compelled to use force," said one of the *sbirri* calmly.

"*Demonio!*" exclaimed Giustiniani, "this is more than I can comprehend. Heaven help me! You are not going to take me to the Pozzi?"

"We are going to take you where we were ordered," replied the laconic man, who by this time, together with his fellow, had carried Giustiniani into the gondola, and seated him.

"Silence, signor," he said, whilst the two gondoliers seized their oars, and the gondola started out into the darkness.

Precisely at the same hour Signor Castruccio, horror depicted in every feature, rushed into Aimond's apartment in the Stella d'Oro. "For Heaven's sake, make haste, signor!" he exclaimed, as he sank into a chair, trembling with excitement. "This Giustiniani, this devil incarnate, is already on the way to Santa Maria. He will ruin everything. Hasten; take Corallina at least under your protection that he does not murder her!"

Aimond, who was just concluding his toilette for the ceremony in the church, that he might start for Signora Lucia, endeavoured to obtain explanations from the terrified man; but Castruccio gave only confused answers, from which Aimond learned that Corallina had made her escape and gone alone to the church; that all, however, was

discovered, and that nothing was left but to hasten to the church to protect Corallina from Giustiniani's rage.

"Then come, come!" exclaimed Aimond, hastening across the threshold.

"I?—I accompany you? I meet Giustiniani in the church? Rather to——"

Aimond lost no time in persuasion. He rushed down the steps of the hotel, sprang into a gondola, and cried—"Ten *sequins* apiece if we are at Santa Maria in ten minutes."

"Your word, signor," replied the gondolier, and the light vessel darted like an arrow over the silent water.

The ten minutes were hardly over when she reached the quay of church.

A faint light glimmered through the church windows. Aimond hastened up the steps, and entered the imposing building. It was lighted only by a few candles upon the high altar. The light faintly illumined the church.

Aimond's eyes fell upon a group of three persons, two men and a lady, who wore a half-mask and a veil.

"Ah, Monsieur Aimond," whispered one of the men, approaching him, "it is well you are come before the time!"

It was the voice of Rousseau.

Aimond hastened past him to the lady. She flew towards him, threw her arms around his neck, and cried—"Oh, save me, save me! I am in mortal terror lest he pursue us!"

"Corallina—my bride, my wife," said Aimond, pressing her passionately to his heart; "fear nothing; you are now under my protection, and will be so for ever."

"But let us hasten," persisted Rousseau. "Corallina thinks that Giustiniani is in pursuit; that——"

Aimond drew Corallina's arm within his own, and advanced with her to the altar.

The second gentleman—it was Consul Le Blond—hastened after them, and disappeared into the sacristy. Immediately he returned with the priest; a chorister with a book and a light followed them.

The bridal pair advanced to the steps of the altar. The priest cast a penetrating glance upon Aimond, as though he would persuade himself of his identity; then began the ceremony.

It was completed without disturbance. Without disturbance the pair then registered their names in the book in the sacristy; Rousseau and Le Blond signed their names as witnesses.

There was no longer anything to fear from Giustiniani. His authority over Corallina was at an end. It was proposed to return to his palace to announce to him what had taken place.

Suddenly a man appeared upon the threshold of the church.

"There he is!" whispered Corallina, clinging to Aimond.

"Not he," exclaimed the latter; "it is Paolucci. What has happened?" said Aimond, advancing to meet him.

"The best thing, the luckiest thing, the most comical thing in the world. Giustiniani is arrested; he is in custody, and we are safe from him!"

"Arrested? Giustiniani?" they exclaimed in a breath.

"I have just come from my home, and learned the whole affair. The *sbirri* whom I had engaged to arrest Signor Aimond when I thought him a traitor, have seized Giustiniani instead. It is rich!"

"So, then, the night is ours!" exclaimed Rousseau. "Aimond, you had better make use of it in departing from Venice. I will go and make out your passports; betake yourself over to Giustiniani's palace to obtain Corallina's things; Le Blond will accompany you in case of difficulty; he will demand them in the name of France, whose subject Corallina now is. Make haste, and when you are ready for your journey come to me for your passport. I shall wait for you all night at the palace of the legation."

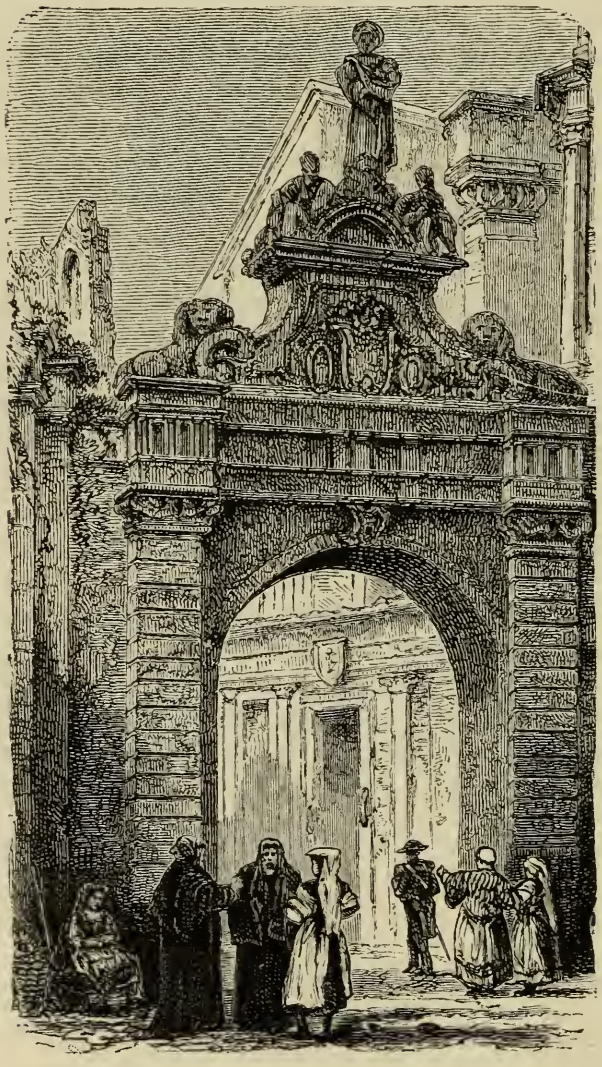
The suggestions of Rousseau were followed; the gondolas started, one to the house of Paolucci, one to the palace of Giustiniani, where all were so alarmed at the news of the arrest of the master of the house that no objections were raised to the departure, especially as Veronese and Camilla had not yet returned home. The former lay in a stupor at Castruccio's house, and Camilla would not leave him in this condition.

So, about midnight, the necessary papers were called for. Rousseau speeded the newly-married couple with his best wishes. These latter landed an hour later at "Mestre" safe and sound.

The next morning Giustiniani, after receiving many apologies and assurances that his arrest was a mistake, returned to his palace. That he found Corallina no longer there did not surprise him at all. He had suspected it. But as a wise man he silently accepted the trick they had played him. He did not even drive Castruccio from his service; but he drove, so soon as the *stagione* was at an end, his whole troupe away for ever.

A DAY AT PÆSTUM.

By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S., Author of "Letters from Majorca," "In the Lotus-Land," etc., etc.



Salerno.

NAPLES was overflowing—not with the lovely blue waters of the tideless sea, but with that other and yet more restless stream of human travellers that seems to possess no boundary and obeys no laws. It was the full season; and Naples in season and out of season are two very different and distinct places.

On our previous visit the wandering world was wandering elsewhere. Naples was in repose. The "marble halls" of the Grand Hotel were full of a calm that was unspeakably soothing and restful. We were a small company of some half-dozen people, with like tastes, as it happened, and similar prejudices—those prejudices one would not be without. We saw much of life from the same point of view, whilst a variety of experiences lent a charm to the hours of meeting.

The white corridors were cool and delightful in their subdued light; we had the small breakfast-room facing the wonderful sea all

to ourselves ; the sunshine flashed upon the blue waters ; the white-winged boats passing gently to and fro, spoke of happiness and repose, and suggested that we should go and do likewise. Gorgeous blooms decorated our table, arranged with a careless grace by the head waiter, who knew our love for the beautiful in Nature, and especially for flowers, and was never weary of showing us quiet attentions.

"You appreciate them," he modestly replied, when we thanked him one day for something he had done more out of the ordinary way than usual. "I would rather serve some people than rule others. Commend me to an hotel for a study of human nature. Also for needing a large amount of that greatest of virtues—patience. Oh, if we could have it like this all the year round ! Only, I suppose, the patron would say it did not pay."

So we breakfasted morning after morning with our ravishing blooms sending forth their scent upon the air which seemed made up of perfume and rainbow tints. The breeze came in at the open window fanning our "fevered brow," always more or less fevered in these brilliant climes. The table d'hôte room echoed at night to our half-dozen voices, whilst each recounted the experiences of the day or of some past time. Each guest was provided with a waiter, so small was the company, so glad the men to break their leisure with the distraction of a little work. They moved silently as shadows, and every wish was anticipated. Without, in the covered court, a company of musicians beguiled the moments with their mandolins and rich Italian voices, guided by an innate sense of music which takes the place of cultivation. These minstrels are born with their talent ; they know nothing of discords, and delight one all the more that their performances have almost the charm and feeling of improvisation. It was an ideal life altogether ; and Naples at such times is worthy of its reputation.

But on the special occasion of which we are writing, how different was this queen of cities, how noisy her reign, how crowded her thoroughfares, how restless the life ! Where was the old charm ? It had vanished as utterly as a mist before the sun ; as completely as the black smoke from yonder burning mountain rising towards heaven dispersed and disappeared in the ether, leaving the skies still blue and unspotted.

We had entered the city late at night, tired of the long, hot, dusty journey. The heat had come in very suddenly, and weather prophets declared that as suddenly it would depart. For once they foretold truly. The thermometer was 80° in the shade, yet within a week the whole of Europe was buried in white, and the hills and valleys instead of laughing for joy were shivering under their unbroken mantle of snow. But for the present moment we had warmth and sunshine in abundance during the day, and balmy breezes through the restful hours of darkness.

It was dark enough and late enough when the train steamed into the Naples terminus. All through our long journey we had visions before us of the cool halls, the peace and repose of the Grand Hotel. We were indulging in a fool's paradise; forgetting, in the first place, that things seldom repeat themselves; and secondly, that Naples was now in full season. We had written for our old rooms, and for a carriage to meet us; for we had lively remembrances of a former arrival, when we had been half devoured by rival coachmen, which might have ended badly if the station-master had not happened to come up to our rescue at the extreme moment of peril.

To-night, on arrival, we were forcibly appropriated by a conductor who marshalled us up to an omnibus and insisted upon our entering. But it did not bear the name of our hotel and we objected. Upon which he flew off into a paroxysm of gesticulations, in the midst of which we left him, and took an antediluvian fly standing next to it. The conductor then used sundry cabalistic signs and words to the driver, and we dashed away at breakneck speed. The ricketty machine swayed to and fro, creaked, groaned, and otherwise protested that its life was in danger, and ours was not worth an hour's purchase. All in vain. No one drives so furiously as the Neapolitans; and as any rule of the road is never attended to—apparently does not exist—every one who hires a conveyance in Naples does so at the risk of his existence.

"I think we are going wrong," said H., as the fly with an extra lurch and groan darted round a corner at an acute angle. "This is not the way to the Riviera di Chiaja."

The streets were deserted, and the man was dashing along furiously; the whole thing looked alarming and suspicious. He was an evil-looking man—deformed, with black, wicked-looking eyes, and a mouth with a terrible leer. Even when we engaged him we had thought somehow of Quasimodo.

H. was right. We had turned our backs upon the Chiaja, and were going through narrow tortuous streets, with a sound of artillery. To lean out and protest was the work of a moment. A wild laugh, a flourish of the whip towards the sky, as if there was our destination and we had done with earth for ever, was all our answer.

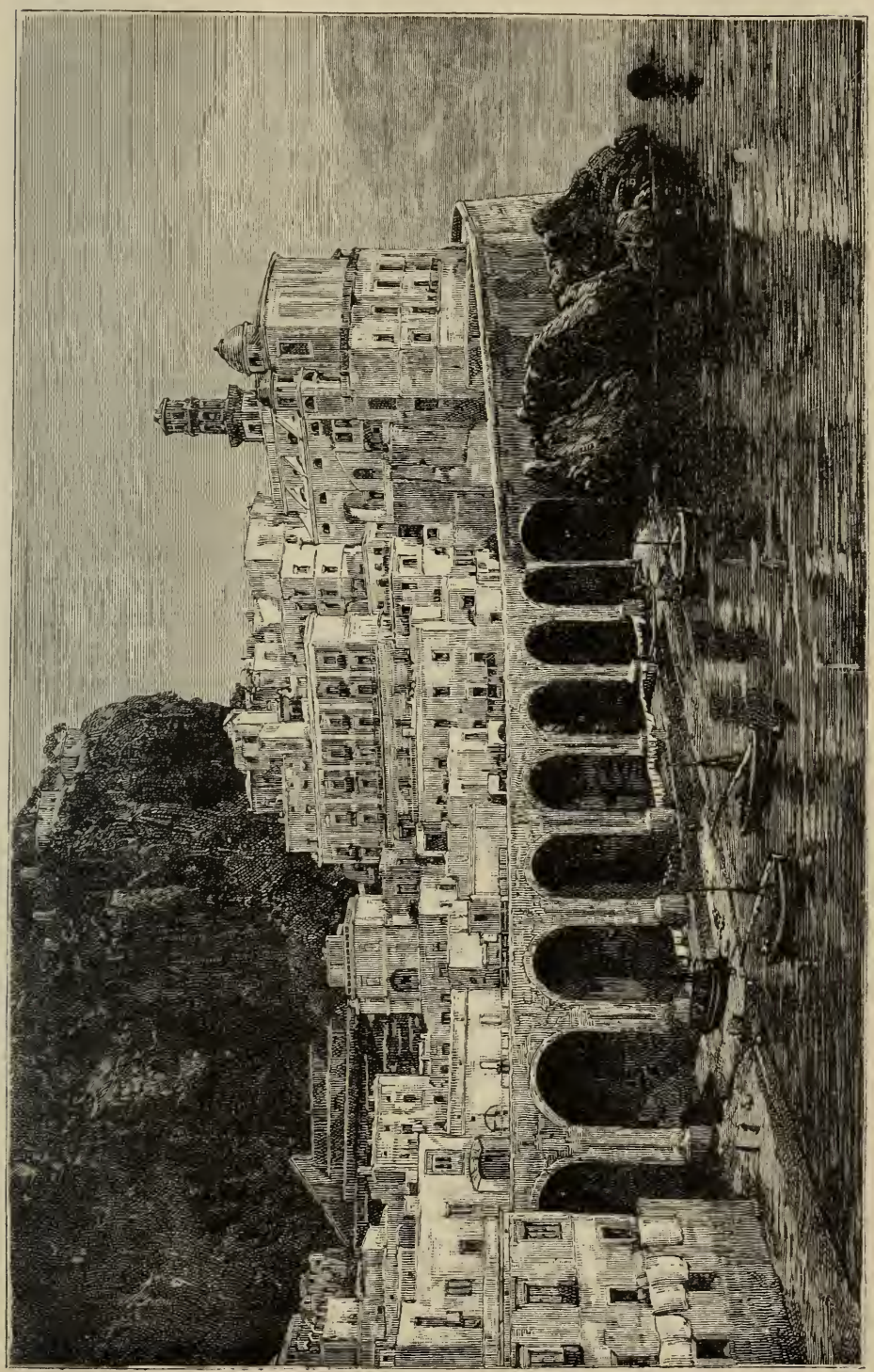
"We are evidently going to be murdered," said H. comfortably. "Having escaped the perils of Egypt, the wilds of the desert, the rapacity of dragomans, the cunning of the Bedouins, we are destined to perish ignominiously at the hands of a Neapolitan *vetturino*.

"Not without an effort," we returned; and taking the opportunity of a lull in the speed at a sharp ascent, we sprang out and stopped the horse.

"If you don't at once drive to the Grand Hotel we will turn you off the box and take the reins." This in our most fiery tones.

The wild laugh died out abruptly and the whip ceased to point to the skies.

"Grand Hotel no use," returned Quasimodo in bad but musical Italian. "No room ; quite full."



AMALFI.

"That is our affair," we replied. "Yours is to drive us there, and leave the rest to us."

We were two to one, and Quasimodo had to give in. With a shrug of the shoulders and a "Si, signore," he changed the direction of his route, and presently turned into the broad and beautiful Chiaja. The starlit sky above us seemed to smile down with a serene protection. We were soon at the far end, where the lights of the Grand Hotel were turning night into day.

Then we found that Quasimodo had not been altogether in the wrong, and probably had not had murderous intentions on our behalf. The Grand was full to overflowing.

"But did you not receive our letter, asking you to reserve our old rooms, and telling you that we should be here to-night?" we protested.

"Certainly; but every room was already engaged. Your own rooms have had the same occupants this fortnight past. This morning a steamer arrived and we turned away seventy passengers. It is with deep regret we cannot take you in. We have done our best in reserving you excellent rooms in our other hotel—the West End Hotel—where you will be as comfortable as here. It is the next best hotel in Naples, and it is quite full also."

Evidently there was no help for it; we must resign ourselves to our fate. It was not a very terrible one after all. The present repose of the Grand had existed only in our imagination. The covered court which had once delighted us with its comparative solitude and its artistic minstrels, was crowded to-night with a restless throng. We went up the white steps for a moment and found ourselves in a perfect Babel. On this occasion, for the most part, they were neither English nor Americans, but Germans; Germans at their loudest. The reader perhaps knows what this means: though probably he has not, like the writer, sat down to a *table d'hôte* day after day, day after day, in a German town—the famous University city of Leipzig—with four hundred people all talking at railroad speed, quite nine-tenths of them loud and energetic upon the self-interested topics of sale and barter. If he had done so he would probably have gone out of his mind.

To-night, at the Grand at Naples, the scene and the occasion were both very different from that past experience. The crowd here was bent upon pleasure; laughter went round; if the Germans can be frivolous it is at such a moment. The glass roof seemed to echo and magnify a thousand tones. Coffee and champagne and cigars mingled their incense; the atmosphere was clouded to the density that Germans seem to delight in. The doors leading to the great dining-room, the salons, all were open. A constant stream of people passed to and fro. There was no rest anywhere; these sounds must reach to the very ends of the building.

"We have not lost so very much after all," said H. "It takes a good deal to give me a headache, but I don't think I could stand this. The West End Hotel—what a peculiar name to give it!—can-

not be worse, and it may be better than this. We may gain by the exchange, after all."

Quasimodo was still standing in the outer doorway, the embodiment of ugliness and mild triumph. But now that we saw him in the full blaze of light, his eyes lost much of their wickedness, his leer became almost amiable. Indeed, the prevailing expression of the face seemed a sort of dumb, pathetic protest at Nature for having dealt out to him none of her favours.

The manager appeared to read our thoughts as we both scanned him narrowly, just as one scans a wild animal at the Zoo.

"It is true the man is very ugly," said he, smiling; "but it is his chief fault. He is not wicked."

"We thought he looked rather like a murderer," remarked H., rather rashly.

"Heaven forbid!" cried the manager. "The poor man is more likely to be murdered than to commit murder. He has a shrew of a wife with the temper of a fiend. Quasimodo——"

"But is he called Quasimodo?" we interrupted. "It is what we ourselves have been mentally calling him since we engaged him."

"Every one calls him so, here," laughed the manager; "the likeness is too perfect not to be suggestive. Well, Nature has not only been niggardly towards him, but fate has also been unkind. He is very good and patient under his affliction, never retorts, never answers; but the neighbours declare that one day there will be bloodshed in his house. The wife's fury is something very like madness."

"Is it possible that any woman was found willing to marry such an afflicted being?"

"Ay, and a pretty woman into the bargain. But it is all outside show; she is a demon within. They are the opposite to each other."

"And so ought to be well matched," we remarked.

"As they are," returned the manager. "If the woman had married one of her own temper, there would have been murder long ago; but it is probable that she would have been the victim."

Poor Quasimodo! His troubles raised our sympathy and made him almost beautiful in our eyes. We re-entered his rickety old conveyance, which, like his wife's tempers, seemed to threaten a momentary catastrophe and left so much to be desired.

The messenger bowed us away, assuring us that we should be even more comfortable at the West End than at the Grand—all things considered—and we turned once more into the broad drive of the Chiaja. Again the laugh came forth and the whip pointed to the skies as Quasimodo turned and looked at us with a pardonable triumph; but somehow the laugh had lost its wildness, and the raised whip meant no longer journey than the West End Hotel. That other journey to the Eternal Shores that we must all one day take separately and alone had probably not entered into his imagination.

Bay of Naples.

When we reached the hotel, the manager was on the steps dismissing a benighted traveller, who had been from one inn to another in the vain endeavour to find a resting-place. "I will pay you anything," he was protesting, "if you will only take me in. A boot-closet —a wine-cellar—a coal-shed—anything will satisfy me."

"I am very sorry, sir," laughed the manager. "We are already overcrowded, and have not an inch of room left. Naples has never been so full." Then he turned to us. "You are late, sirs," he said. "The omnibus we sent to meet the train returned more than half-an-hour ago. Fortunately we have reserved your rooms, though we have had twenty applications for them, as the conductor told me you had arrived. How is this?"—turning sternly to Quasimodo. "Have you been taking the gentlemen for a drive to Pompeii or up Mount Vesuvius?"

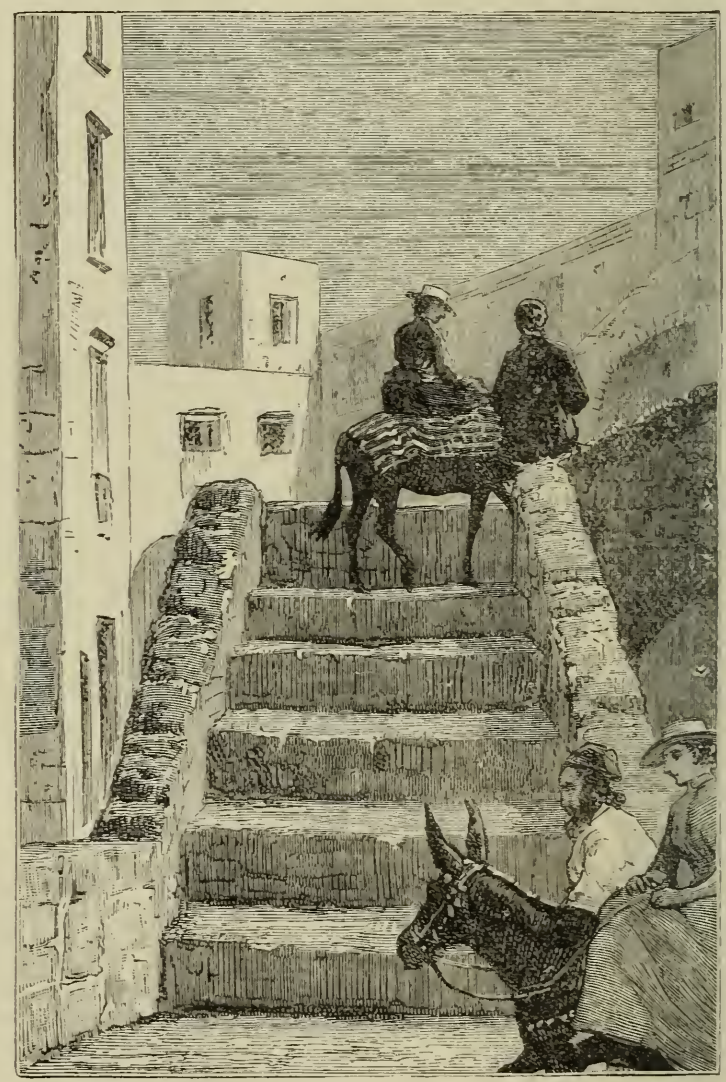
But Quasimodo only laughed and flourished his whip, whilst a porter shouldered our luggage, and the hospitable doors of the hotel closed upon us. Meeting the benighted traveller the next day he told us that he had found very comfortable quarters at the Gran Bretagna in the Chiaja. It was quiet, unfrequented by foreigners, and he thought himself quite in clover.

We also were well satisfied with our own quarters. For the moment the West End was certainly quieter than the Grand. There were fewer Germans, the nations were more mixed, and the people more divided. At the Grand it had seemed like one huge family, all meeting together, all talking, laughing, and gesticulating at the same time. All nations, excepting the English, are clannish. There is a sort of national *esprit de corps* amongst them. As soon as they meet they do not glare at each other; but they rush up and shake hands and ask after the Fatherland, and you would think they had been the best of friends for many years. *Autres peuples, autres mœurs!* Nothing can be truer.

But at the West End we missed the view to be found at the Grand. That wonderful view of the Bay of Naples; that flashing sapphire sea on which the white-winged boats disported themselves in a dream existence; that burning Vesuvius which one loves the more one sees it, with its strange fascination, its pillar of smoke by day, its lurid tongues of flame by night. In the distance, the Island of Capri, enveloped in a purple haze, rising out of the water intangible as a vision. Near at hand the castle-crowned heights of Puzzuoli, where St. Paul once spent seven days after he had been wrecked on the Island of Melita, on his way to Rome. Away downward by the sea, and lost in the distance, that wonderful coast-road, that matchless drive, leading to Amalfi and Sorrento, where orange-blossoms send forth their perfume upon the air, and villas nestle in earthly paradises, and plashing fountains lull you to slumber and influence your dreams.

There was nothing of all this lovely view at the West End Hotel.

We opened our windows that first night, and all we saw, above the roofs of the houses and the sleeping town, was Vesuvius sending upwards its angry flames, now almost dying out, now shooting forth with renewed vigour, a strange, unearthly sight, to which one never grows quite accustomed—a silent messenger, as it were, doing the bidding of some mysterious unseen, unknown avenger. To-night



AMALFI.

everything was still. A few cats in hideous revelry, a distant dog baying at the moon, these alone broke the solemn silence of the night, and intruded upon the darkness.

In our various visits to Naples we had never been to Pæstum, and of all famous places in that neighbourhood, what could be more interesting? But something had always arisen to prevent the excur-

sion. It seemed that we were not to go there. Once upon a time it could not be done in a day; inns on the way were uncomfortable; there was the fear of brigands. Many a traveller, gazing upon the wonderful ruins, had suddenly been pounced upon by fierce banditti with broad-brimmed hats and ferocious expression, and very desperately in earnest. The agreeable choice of "Your money or your life" was not always given them; first they took the one, then the other, leaving the birds of the air to bury their victims, and the sad sea waves to chant a requiem.

We wanted nothing of this for ourselves; whatever H. had done we had passed the romantic age of twenty, when there is a certain sentimental attraction in the idea of possessing a broken pillar for one's tombstone. As life goes on, its inevitable troubles and sorrows rob us of all illusion upon the point. We learn that there is no real sentiment in sorrow, but only a chastening influence. Life is full of hard realities, though also of compensations.

So we were not sorry to hear that the days of danger and adventure were over for Pæstum. Picturesque brigands with "quiet attentions" no longer lurked there. The railway now went up almost to the very ruins themselves, and the brigands had been obliged to transfer their profession to other fields and pastures. In fact, the age of brigandage is fast disappearing in all but very remote districts.

We learned this good news one Saturday morning from M. Hauser, the proprietor of the Grand, where we had gone for our letters and to ask him when Naples would return to its peace and repose. He confessed that it was a little too crowded now, even for him.

"But you will scarcely ever again find the quietness you experienced at your last visit," he added. "Travelling has become not the fashion, but the rage. For this, people work and save, and spend their money and go back to work—those who are not fortunate enough to be independent. Even the Germans, as you see, now travel in crowds—they who until recently scarcely ever thought of leaving their Fatherland. Soon the French will do likewise. The world will become a huge caravanserai—everyone will be found everywhere, excepting in their own home and country."

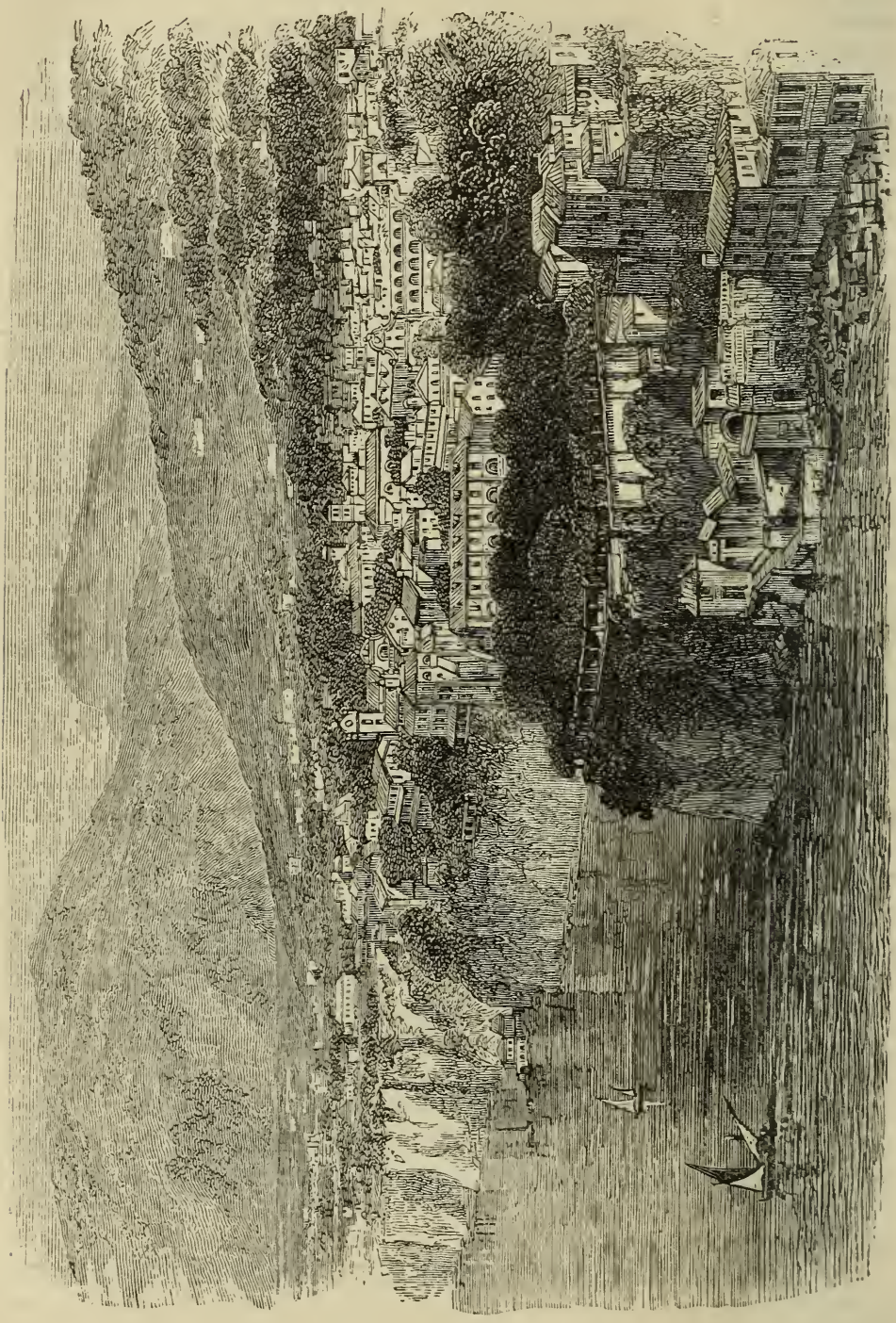
We asked about Pæstum.

"You have never been there?" he returned in surprise. "Then, sirs, you must no longer delay. It is too late for to-day, but you can take to-morrow morning's early train. You may be back in time for *table d'hôte* at night, and if you would prefer to dine here I will have two places reserved for you."

"What about luncheon?" asked H., who was at that delightful period of age and health when such considerations are not mere matters of duty.

"You must take it with you," returned M. Hauser. "I will send word to the manager of your hotel to prepare you a luncheon basket of the very choicest."

"A piece of cake and a bottle of the best of wine, as the fair Sophia prepared for Lord Bateman," interrupted H., laughing.



SORRENTO.

The proprietor looked a little at sea.

"Lord Bateman?" he questioned. "I do not think he has ever stayed here, and certainly not with any Miss Sophia," in a rather

shocked tone. "But you shall have an admirable luncheon. At Pæstum you can obtain nothing. There are the ruins and a few small private houses, and nothing but a poor little cabaret which you would not care to enter, and where certainly you would find nothing to eat."

"What about brigands?" continued H., having satisfactorily disposed of the luncheon question. "One does not quite wish to be murdered, or even to pay a heavy ransom. From all one hears, these 'gentlemen of the road' must be desperate characters."

"The brigands are at an end as regards Pæstum," laughed the proprietor. "That great civilising lever the railway has proved their deathblow. You are as safe at Pæstum as in your own drawing-room at home. And if I may presume to make the remark, sir," scanning H.'s proportions, who stood a head and shoulders above the writer, "you would be a match for any two brigands, if not for half-a-dozen."

"All the same," returned H., "one prefers to choose one's opponents—like one's weapons in a duel."

"There will be no opponents to-morrow, I will promise you. Moreover it is Sunday—the very best day for your visit. You will have the place almost to yourselves."

Upon referring to our plans and engagements, it proved to be the only day we could devote to Pæstum; and so for once we decided to break our rule of spending a quiet Sunday. Quiet it would still be, but not altogether a day of rest. Yet it would be rest and repose to get out of hot and crowded Naples for a few hours; a wholesome change, morally and physically.

M. Hauser must have more than fulfilled his promise, for early the next morning the manager was at the door to see us off, and a luncheon basket was placed in the carriage that seemed to hold provisions for a week, not merely for one mid-day meal.

"A most invigorating supply," laughed H. "I don't believe a word about the absence of brigands. They will be there in full force, and we shall have to entertain them, and 'do the honours of the table.' Perhaps that is the usual ransom."

"By order of M. Hauser," said the manager, in reply to our glance of amusement, "we were to be especially liberal in our wine and fruit. At Pæstum, I assure you, that you will appreciate both."

"You have been prodigal," we cried; and in another moment we were off.

This time it was not Quasimodo who occupied the box, but a man who had not even the distinction of ugliness to redeem him from the commonplace. As yet the streets were deserted; there was no one to knock down, though we drove furiously. Naples was quiet, almost cool and pleasant. The long drive to the railway station seemed less long than usual, though once more we wondered why they do not have a more central terminus. At the ticket office the clerk began by cheating us heavily in giving us short change. We protested that we

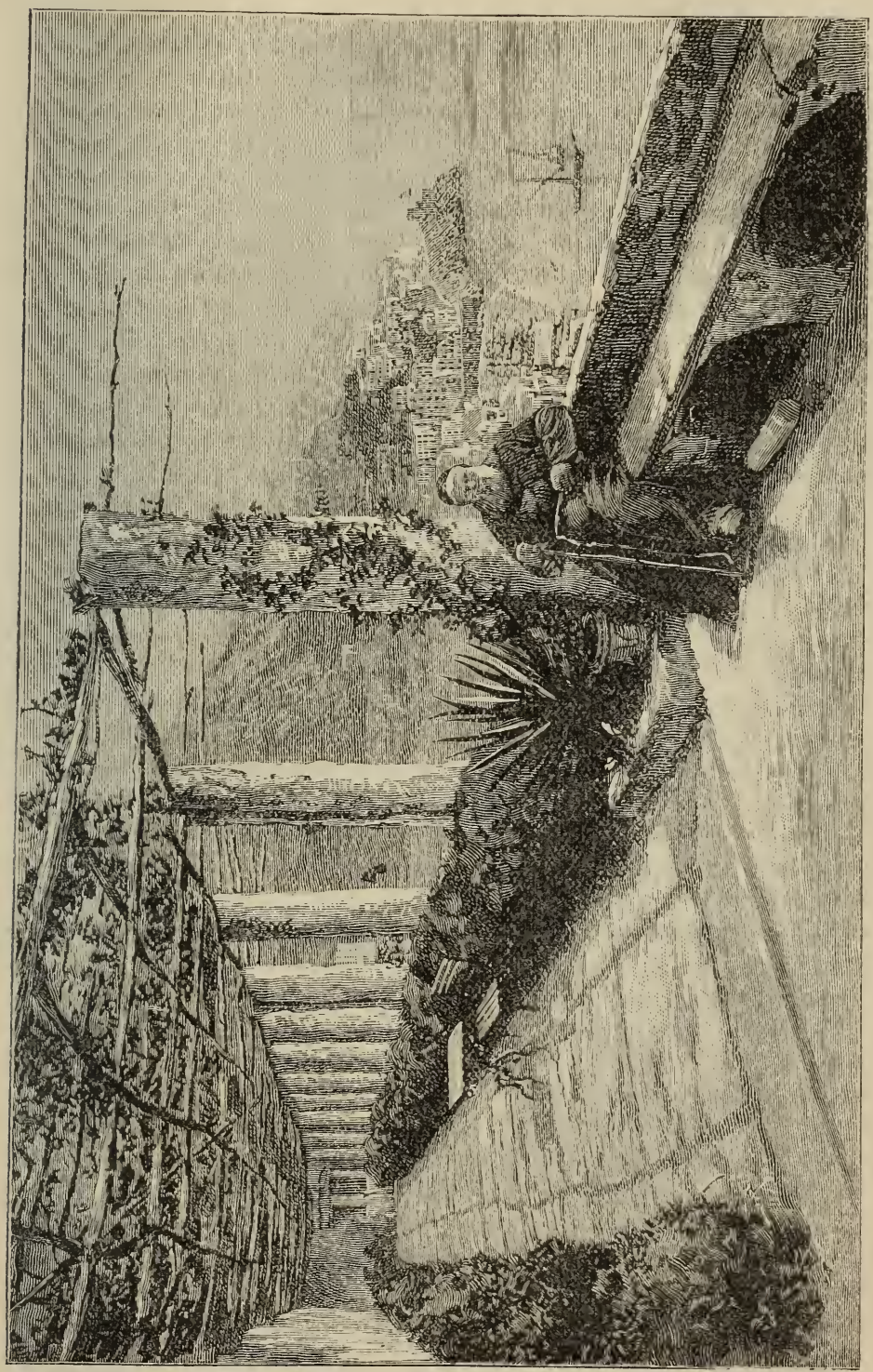
had not received enough by several francs, but could obtain no redress. The train was almost ready to start, others behind us were waiting and might wax impatient, after the manner of an ordinary waiting crowd; we had to put up with the imposition. But one has to be imposed upon in going through the world, and it is best to make up one's mind to the inevitable. Otherwise one's mental peace would be in constant jeopardy; the "calm exterior" that is so necessary would become impossible.

In going to Pæstum by train one loses of course that wonderful drive that has scarcely its equal in the world; the coast road which takes you round by Castellamare, with its cool river running so calmly to the sea, and its homely inns where so few ever think of staying, but hurry onwards to the lemon groves of "la gentile" Sorrento. Here the outlook upon the blue waters of the Mediterranean, where Capri rises up in all its glory, is almost matchless. You pass beneath graceful trellis arrangements, of vine leaves and the giant convolvulus, that shade you from some of the glare and trace their beautiful forms upon the white path beneath your feet. You skirt the deep ravines, supposed by the country people to be inhabited by a small uncanny race, who are only visible on moonlight nights, when they come out and hold revelry and chase each other from crag to crag. It was here that Tasso was born; here that he was received by his sister, disguised as a shepherd, when trouble overtook him. His favourite view may still be seen in all its magic; nature alone has eternal youth. He loved to climb to the Capodimonte, and hour after hour would never tire of gazing out upon that sea and sky, that broken and romantic shore, than which none of the poet's visions and fancies could ever have been more beautiful. Sorrento lies at one's feet, Monte S. Angelo rises upwards in all its charm, and afar off Vesuvius is sending forth its pillar of smoke, as if demanding a perpetual holocaust.

Beyond Capodimonte you may go onwards, if you will, to the Deserto, once a flourishing monastery, but now a refuge for poor children, superintended by quiet monks in cowl and cloak. Here we are in the neighbourhood of suppressed monasteries, which only prove how well the old monks knew how to choose their local habitations. There is a singular charm in visiting these large and almost deserted buildings. The monks who trod these corridors and cloisters are sleeping their last sleep in the small cemeteries, their nameless graves marked only by wooden crosses. In all the passages silence reigns; the cells are empty. Yet ghostly shadows seem to lurk everywhere; ghostly footsteps follow in the echoes of your own. "After labour, rest"; that is true; but there is also a sadness in every sunset.

Onwards, down this wonderful drive, and you reach Point Campanella, and turn your back upon Capri and the Gulf of Naples, and rounding, look on to the waters of Salerno. During the whole experience of this drive you feel out of the world, above the world.

The scene seems almost miraculous, and underlying all, you have a



AMALFI: ALBERGO DEL CAPPUCCINI.

distinct feeling of pain. It all appeals to your soul more than your senses, and the soul longs to spread her wings and flee away.

In due time you reach Amalfi, surrounded by its wonderful mountains and rocks, where, however, you will find few traces of antiquity. Most beautiful and most interesting are the remains of the Capuchin monastery, founded in the thirteenth century for the Cistercian monks, who yielded to the Capuchins in 1583. It stands magnificently on a rock rising abruptly above the sea to a height of some two hundred and thirty feet. Its destiny is no longer sacred, for it has become a dependance of one of the hotels, the Albergo del Cappuccini; and it may be that the old monks turn and turn in their graves at the desecration of the cloisters. Or they may have died philosophers, and realised that they, too, and their order must, like everything else, suffer a "sea change." This does not always mean progress, because the spirit of the times is not always wisdom. The Albergo della Luna is also an ancient and most picturesque monastery, but it is not quite so well placed, and therefore is less frequented than the other. On the other hand, it possesses more quietness and repose.

Far down is the deep and luxuriant ravine, where the running water turns mill after mill, giving work to a small army of hands, who stream out day after day, and make the valley echo with their light-hearted gaiety and laughter, little recking of the beauty of the world they live in. So many eyes are closed to so much that is best and highest in life's pilgrimage: we miss so many aids. Visiting these marvellous places only occasionally, we feel as if it would be a privilege to spend a lifetime amongst them; we feel almost as if we were at the very portals of heaven; but if long years made us familiar with them, should we, too, grow indifferent? Would they cease to charm and elevate and refine? There was wisdom in the feeling which made men of old draw a curtain in front of their most beautiful paintings.

Then comes Salerno, rising on the Apennine, with its ancient and narrow streets, that carry you back to the early centuries and the days of the Lombards. You gaze upon its wide and fertile plains, where every species of vegetation seems to find a home, and cornfields mingle their golden grain with rich vineyards, and orange and lemon groves scent the air with a perfume so delicate and delicious that it cannot by any possibility be transported or imagined. There is no scent in the wide, wide world equal to the perfume of the lemon for the first hour after you have plucked it from the tree.

So the journey progresses by easy stages. It is impossible to pass rapidly through such scenes as these. You give days where you intended to give hours; and you are unhappy and unsatisfied because you cannot extend the days to months, and, by a long sojourn, so enter into the spirit of the scenes as to make them your own for ever. A short sojourn, a rapid journey, have in them all the pain of unfulfilled desire.

But the longest and most lingering journey comes to an end, and

LOOKING ON TO CAPRI.

if Pæstum has been the goal of this drive, the hour comes when, against the background of clear Italian sky, there rises that wonderful vision of ruined temples. You feel that the goal is worthy even of the drive. The discomfort of small inns, the danger of brigands, all should be braved for such a reward.

It was such an experience and such a drive that we missed on the occasion of which we are writing. By rail we performed in a few hours what years before would have taken days or weeks. We had not the days to give, and so had no choice in the matter. We were glad to be able to do it even by train. "You will miss the wonderful drive," we said to H.; "but your life is only unfolding, and you have all the years before you; and probably, when you visit it again, nothing will be changed but your companion."

The train passed out through the crowded, closely-built suburbs of Naples—a mixture of houses and never-ending streets, and sloping gardens, and flashes of the blue Mediterranean—scenes with which we had long been familiar. Before us Vesuvius was sending up his column of black smoke. Beneath his shadow reposed Pompeii, that wonderful city of ruins, where you feel transported back to the earliest centuries of our era. The glamour of interest and romance surrounding, enveloping Pompeii, will never die out. The tragedy that took place all those centuries ago seems ever present to our imaginations, as though it happened but yesterday. As we gaze upon the ruined streets, we see the hurrying crowds, we hear the despairing cries of those whose last moments had come upon them as a thief in the night. We see the lurid flames shooting up from the burning mountain, the molten lava spreading on all sides, the showers of ashes that fell upon the doomed city; we see the little crowd upon the shore, the vessels putting out upon the black and turbulent waters, merely exchanging, as it seemed, one death for another. There are no ruins in the world so mournful and pathetic as those of Pompeii.

The train halted here for a few minutes, and then went onwards into the mountains; passing away from houses and crowds into the repose of Nature. The train was slow, but the journey gave us a succession of magnificent views. Now we passed through narrow valleys and ravines, the hills on either side rising often precipitously; or opening out, and receding into the distance, gave place to fertile plains, to oliveyards and vineyards, the orange and lemon groves, without which Italy would lose so much of her charm. Fruit-trees seem to grow here in rich abundance. The mulberry was especially prominent, so also the pomegranite, the fig-tree, and the apple. The acacia threw out its scent, and the aloe raised its prickly spears. As the train wound in and out, every now and then the blue waters of the Gulf of Salerno opened up like a celestial vision. One could only wish the train to linger.

At Angri two people entered our compartment, with an immense net full of all sorts of provisions. We wondered uncomfortably

whether they were going to Pæstum, but they obligingly left at La Cava, and for the rest of the journey we had the carriage, almost the whole train, to ourselves. At length on approaching our destination, the plain to our right widened, and against the background of sky the ruins we had come to see stood out in solemn grandeur and repose. A few moments more and we stopped at the small station of Pesto, as the Italians call it. Besides ourselves there alighted three ladies and a soldier. The latter had evidently come to spend the day with his friends, for he hurried down the road towards a small house on the plain, regardless of antiquities. The ladies mysteriously disappeared, how or where, it was impossible to say. They were all draped in deep mourning, and as we chanced to look back their sombre figures had stood out prominently against the white dusty road. We looked again and they had vanished, whether into the earth or into thin air we could not tell.

"This is uncanny," said H. "We bargained for possible brigands, but not for ghosts. You cannot fight an unseen enemy. They may be Syrens escaped from their island in yonder waters, come to lure us to destruction. What can have become of them?"

That we never discovered. Syrens or not, they did not again cross our path. We had watched their tall, dignified figures as they passed out of the station in our wake, unencumbered by luncheon baskets, as if the vulgar necessity of refreshment were unknown to them; then suddenly they had vanished from our sight, and were lost to us for ever. Were they the embodied spirits of the three temples before us, doomed occasionally to haunt the world in human form? To the temples we turned, but they were silent upon the point.

As we went down the straight white road, they stood before us in all their solemn beauty, clearly outlined against the sky: some of the most graceful ruins in the world. How long they have stood here is unknown. Next to the ruins of Athens, they are the most perfect examples of pure Greek architecture in existence, distinguished by all the repose and refinement and nameless charm of the Greek school. What they must have been in their glory, what Pæstum itself must have been, it is difficult for imagination to conceive. In those early days the sea came up to the very base of the ruins, and the sound of the waves must have mingled with their religious sacrifices. The scene must have been marvellous in its beauty. Pæstum was a flourishing city, supposed by some to have been founded by the Phœnicians, by others by the Etruscans. According to Strabo, it was founded by a colony of Greeks who came from Sybaris, and apparently fell in love with the magnificent prospect. This was at least six hundred years before the Christian era. Three hundred years later, at the height of its prosperity, it fell into the hands of the Romans.

Later on came its period of decay. In the ninth century it was devastated by the Saracens, and in the eleventh century the monuments

of the deserted town were nearly all despoiled by Robert Guiscard, to build the Cathedral of Salerno.

To-day the three temples stand alone in the midst of a wilderness of plains, with a panorama of hills in the background on the one side, whilst the clear, calm, blue waters of the Mediterranean stretch far down in all their beauty on the other. These waters no longer wash the base of the temples; they have gradually receded with the lapse of ages; the plain has grown larger and wider, and the waters seem to have shrunk back in sorrow at the ruin and desecration of this once flourishing and famous town.

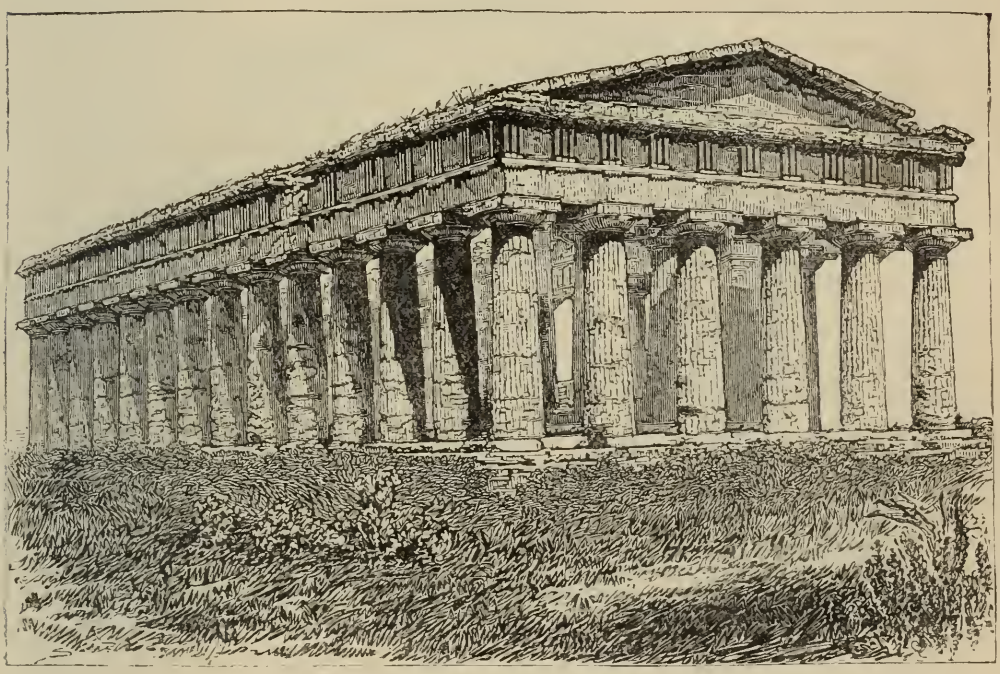
The ruins stand absolutely alone; nothing can be more majestic, more solemn and imposing, than the effect of these voiceless monuments of a dead past in the midst of the silent and desolate plains; but this silence and desolation are already threatened. A few small houses have sprung up, where, until the railway was made, there was no sign of human habitation. By-and-by the colony will increase, and one of the great charms of Pæstum will disappear.

To-day we were favoured. We had the ruins to ourselves, as M. Hauser had prophesied. Nothing disturbed our enjoyment beyond a few small boys who lived in the cottages already alluded to, and who evidently imagined the rare wine and luscious fruit had been provided by the manager solely for their benefit and delectation. Some small Italian money, however, worked wonders, and sent them away rejoicing. We were left in peace.

It was indeed a Sabbath peace. We were absolutely alone in the midst of the plain and the temples. It is doubtful whether within the four walls of a church, in Naples or elsewhere, a better sermon could have been heard than these ruins, all this beauty of Nature, preached to us. As far as they stand they are perfect, and resemble beautiful monuments that were never finished, rather than buildings whose glory has passed away. Of the Temple of Neptune, the largest of the three ruins, not a column is missing; low columns with bold capitals beautifully proportioned. Each end has six fluted Doric pillars, and each side has twelve. The interior has two series of seven columns, and a row of smaller columns above, which supported the roof. This roof has entirely disappeared, and the ruins perhaps gain in beauty in being canopied by the blue Italian sky. The stone employed was travertine, the same used in building St. Peter's and other great monuments in Rome. Age gives it a peculiarly beautiful and mellow tone. It forms the surface of the plain and was probably obtained from the immediate neighbourhood.

We sat long within the ruins, enjoying a prospect and an experience few places could give us. Above all the solitude was full of charm and repose. A recent visit to Egypt had made us so acquainted with crowds that we were in danger of growing misanthropical. These travelling multitudes are distinguished by a restlessness which communicates itself to the very air they breathe. To-day, almost for the

first time for many weeks, we found ourselves free of all human kind, and the relief was inexpressible. Nothing disturbed the charm of our surroundings. The sea in the distance was calm and placid, blue as it ever is on these shores, flashing in the sunlight. About us the bright green lizards darted out of cracks and crevices, looked at us with their restless eyes, and darted in again; but they made no sound. Everywhere absolute stillness reigned. As it was Sunday even the custodian of the ruins did not appear, and we were spared that infliction. The roses and violets for which Pæstum was once celebrated, are no longer to be found here; but the beautiful acanthus, with its graceful leaves, once so copied in architecture, and its less kindly prickles, still flourishes in abundance.



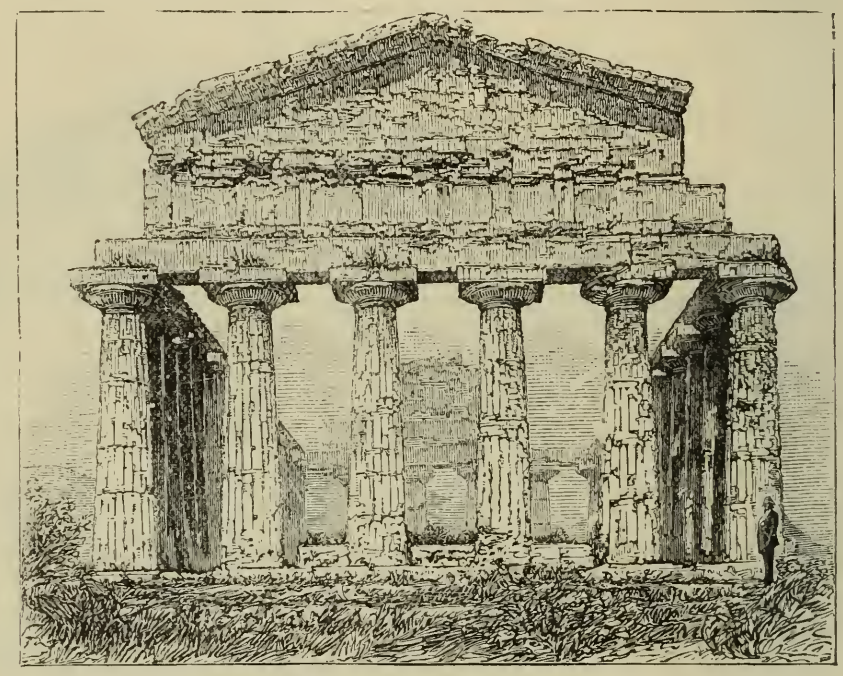
Temple of Neptune.

The distant hills with their varied undulations form a grand and fitting background to the ruins. The Basilica and the Temple of Vesta or Ceres are much smaller than the Temple of Neptune, but they are very perfect and beautiful in themselves, though with less of the majesty and grandeur of the larger ruin. Here, in this lonely and desolate plain, one almost wonders how such gigantic monuments were erected, or how such utter downfall could overtake a city once so prosperous, a people so strong and mighty. Nothing more beautiful and imposing, more graceful and refined, can be found anywhere; Italy can give the traveller nothing more perfect of its kind.

We had walked down the road on first arriving, and reached a small wayside osteria. It was very humble and primitive, but seemed clean

and quaint, and interested us. An open archway, with doors to close at night, admitted one at once into the interior. Within the arch was a table spread with a snow-white cloth.

The mistress of this humble abode came forward and greeted us. She was dressed in her Sunday attire and looked very comely and presentable. Her husband, a rougher specimen of humanity, was in the background, and seemed less at his ease, more shy in approaching. They were evidently poor but respectable. The woman begged that we would make use of the room and the table for luncheon. If we would trust it to her she would spread it for us and wait upon us, whenever we liked to return. Presently they were themselves going to



Temple of Ceres.

take their maccaroni, prepared in the fashion of the country. We might perhaps like a sample of her skill.

It was impossible not to give her the pleasure she desired. Though we would rather have taken our fruit and wine amidst the ruins, when we might have fancied ourselves on Olympus with nectar and ambrosia, we could not refuse the woman's demand. It would have been almost a rejection of hospitality, and would evidently have spoiled her Sunday. That she hoped to be well paid for her little attention was of course inevitable, but the feeling seemed very far in the background. So the basket was confided to her care, and in due time we returned to the little osteria.

It was a curious interior, half civilized, half barbarous, wholly poor and humble. The further end was lost in a "chiaro-oscuro" that

gave the place at once a sense of the picturesque and the mysterious. Much of it was bare as a blacksmith's forge, and very much of the texture and appearance. A round, copper-looking erection contained the fire, and from this savoury fumes were arising. A large pan or saucepan contained a great amount of maccaroni, mysteriously flavoured and coloured, as it seemed, with a tomato preparation. Our table stood just within the archway, mercifully open to all the fresh air, but sheltered from the sun. Before us stretched the wide plain, on which the ruins rose so majestically; whilst afar off the sea lay sleeping in the sunlight.

The inhabitants of the room had been added to by one man, and whilst the woman served us, he and her husband ate their maccaroni in the far-off chiaro-oscuro. The whole scene would have made a grand subject for an artist, if people and tone and place could have been faithfully reproduced. The woman herself was certainly an artist in another but not less popular department, for her maccaroni equalled the best of a Soyer or Francatelli. She was proud of our praise. Evidently she had brought out all the resources of her plate-chest in our honour, for bright leaden spoons decorated the table, and of her three-pronged forks she seemed especially proud. The men behind us in the chiaro-oscuro performed miracles with their knives quite equal to any conjuring we had ever seen. Forks were luxuries they evidently never indulged in, and probably despised. The woman added to her little livelihood by keeping a small shop consisting of sundry bottles and a few tin canisters. As there was no window to the room, these were ranged on shelves just within the arched doorway, and just above our heads.

"But surely," we remarked, "you have no customers for your goods. They must grow old and stale, and you must lose more than you gain."

"Not many customers," returned the woman with a resigned smile—everything about her seemed quiet and resigned—"but more than you would think for. We have only been here since the railway; but already, as you see, there are a few houses in the village. It will grow larger. The station people often want something. Passers-by sometimes give me a turn, and we have a few neighbours in the country here and there. Visitors come to the ruins and often make use of me as you are now doing. And so, one way or another, we find that day by day we have our daily bread. The birds of the air have their food provided for them. I do not think we shall be allowed to starve. I am not afraid. It sometimes comes to our last piece of money. Then 'Something will turn up,' I always say, and it always does turn up."

"Where did you learn this perfect faith?" we asked, full of admiration for the simple trust of this good woman.

"I don't think I quite learned it anywhere," she returned. "I suppose it was born with me. As long as we work and do our best

it is not likely that we shall be allowed to come to want. I could not believe in such a religion as that. But I was an orphan, and some nuns took compassion upon me and brought me up. They were good women, and I feel that I owe them much. I should be there now, only my man came along and persuaded me to marry him. He is a good man, too. Indeed, I am highly favoured, and have only one wish ungratified. I find the place lonesome at times when my man is out at work, and I should like to go back to Vietri, where I once lived, and where I have a brother who is a fisherman, and a sister who is a fisherman's wife. But we cannot have everything exactly as we like in this world; and I daresay the time will come when we may go back to Vietri."

"We should hardly hear a better sermon than that in St. Paul's," said H. quaintly; "for here we have practice as well as precept. The woman deserves a peerage."

"And then she would lose her contentment and grow worldly and ambitious," we returned, laughing at the idea of her "coroneted brow." "Better as she is, and no doubt happier. 'Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown.' But she certainly harmonizes with the place. Like the ruins, there is a quiet dignity about her; if she were educated and refined, there would even be a grandeur."

"They are indeed grand, those ruins," said H., looking out upon the wonderful scene. "Nothing in Egypt impressed me more, excepting perhaps the Tombs of the Caliphs, and the boundless extent of those pathless deserts. But, after all, the comparison scarcely holds good. It seems to me that Egypt stands alone and will not bear any comparison. Do many people visit the ruins?" he asked, turning to our hostess, who stood calmly by with folded hands, evidently much more impressed with H.'s military bearing than with our humbler proportions and quiet air.

"On week days, yes," she returned. "And you little know how necessary the custodian is at those times. If he were not there we should soon have no ruins left at all, they would be chipped to pieces and carried away by all the tourists."

"They would take a good deal of chipping and carrying," laughed H., who as yet had not encountered very much of this demon of destruction.

"Continual dropping will wear away a stone," we quoted, "and chipping is a quicker process. You may rest assured the custodian's office here is no sinecure. Nothing escapes the rage for relics. And like the gathered flowers, half the time they are only thrown away."

"That is true," returned the woman, bringing out a small box containing a fragment of stone. "These are chips that people have taken from the ruins, and cast aside here, or carelessly left behind. It seems to me that to most persons nothing is sacred."

At this moment two cherubs appeared upon the scene from some doorway hidden by the mysterious darkness. They were the per-

fection of infant beauty; a beauty sometimes seen in the children of the poor, and quickly lost. These two might have served as a model to Fra Angelico for his angels, with their large blue eyes, chubby cheeks and golden hair. They were about three years old, and were evidently twins.

"My treasures!" cried the woman, falling for the first time out of quietness into something like rapture. "What would my life be without them? Did I not say, sirs, that I was highly favoured? With these infants to gladden our home I do not envy the richest man in the world, or even the king upon his throne."

She took one up in her arms. The husband came forward and took the other.

"The wife grows excited over the little ones," he said, as if in apology for her excitement. "She thinks there are none like them in the world. And they are fine little fellows, it is true; but I tell her that if she grows too fond of them something will happen."

"Then I should die," cried the mother, a momentary shadow crossing her face. "I could not live without them. Neither could you, Antonio; they make your life as much as they do mine."

How many have said the same under similar circumstances, only to find, not only that man has to submit to the inevitable, but that he can do so? "The heart may break, but brokenly live on." In this case, however, the cherubs looked the picture of health, in no danger of dying. It was to be hoped the mother would keep her treasures.

Our feast of nectar and ambrosia had very soon been over, and we left a large surplus for the benefit of the osteria. The fruit would perhaps chiefly fall to the cherubs, the wine to the father. Women are so unselfish, so self-denying towards those they love, that our hostess would, no doubt, content herself with looking on at the enjoyment of the three who made the sunshine of her life—glad to minister.

We left them to their Sunday feast—dessert after the maccaroni which formed their dinner. One of the cherubs stretched out his arms, and evidently wished H. to carry him off; but this was a charge we were not prepared for. A fruit placed in his fingers proved him but mortal after all, and quickly diverted his attention.

The happy family stood in the doorway as we departed; by the expression of their faces evidently speeding the parting guests. We still had time to spare, and went back to the ruins, amongst which one could almost wander for ever. There are traces of other ruins also to be found, and some portions of the old town walls are still in existence —walls which in days gone by encircled the wonderful town. Yet they could not keep out the enemy, and Pæstum fell, and its glory departed: nothing now remains but three sad, solitary monuments, full of grace, beauty and refinement, full of majesty and grandeur, standing out against the background of the intense sky, which canopies above them, and gleams between the columns, throwing them out into

vivid relief, whilst the sun lowers, and shadows lengthen silently upon the plain.

This was our last impression of the ruins as we turned from them that quiet Sunday afternoon, leaving to us recollections of a day in which there seemed something specially sacred. Once more we went down the white road leading to the station. We looked about, wondering whether the three black-robed figures that had so mysteriously vanished would as mysteriously re-appear. No; there was no sign of them, and in the air there was no suspicion of the supernatural. All we saw was the soldier in front of us making very quickly for the station. He looked round, and by signs made us understand that if we wished to catch the train we must hurry. It was thanks to him that we were not too late, for the whistle had sounded and the train moved off as we jumped into it.

The journey back to Naples was full of quiet charm; the day was dying; and when we passed Vesuvius she was removing her black cap, and putting on her flaming crown.

Our places had been reserved for *table d'hôte* at the Grand; and we were just in time for dinner. It proved an ordeal; a strange contrast to the past day. The large room was crowded to suffocation, additional tables were standing wherever tables could be placed. With very few exceptions the assembled people were German. It was a very Babel of noise, which grew "loud and louder still" as the champagne flowed, and exhilarated those boundless human energies.

When it came to an end it was an inexpressible relief to pass out into the quiet night, under the serene skies and flashing stars of Naples. Vesuvius was sending forth its flames, looking mysterious as ever in the surrounding darkness. Our thoughts naturally went back to Pæstum and the past day.

"A day to be remembered," said H. "One would like it to come over again; and yet, perhaps, it is better not to disturb a first perfect impression."

"Perfection is so rarely found," we returned. "The least drawback destroys it, and a very little alloy may change pleasure to pain."

But to-day for us the twin genii had parted company. There had been no pain in our pleasure. Pæstum for us would remain a recollection holy and wholesome—full of an unbroken charm, not always vouchsafed to us in our way through the world. No doubt the shadows of life are good for us, and, perhaps, they only make us more grateful for those shadowless days with which Providence now and then mercifully lightens our earthly pilgrimage.

LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON.

EVERYONE had always agreed in saying that Major Wodehouse was an excellent father. From the day of his young wife's death he had devoted himself to his son. He had been a young man himself then, but he had not thought it beneath his dignity to go into all the minutiæ concerning the child's food and clothes; and the smart officer playing at horses with his baby boy, and a little later instructing him in the art of cricket, was considered quite a pretty sight at Aldershot.

And the Major had met with no disappointing rebuffs at the hands of his offspring. Jack Wodehouse loved his father heartily, and from the time when he toddled by Dadda's side in a white frock and a scarlet sash, through the school-boy stage when he had confided all his escapades and troubles to the Governor, to the days of his full manhood, his father was his best and dearest friend. Jack, indeed, had refused to go into the Army because he would not leave his father; for by the time the lad's profession began to be a matter of discussion, the Major had retired from the service, and had settled at a pretty place called Uplands in the village of Staunton, and Jack preferred to be articled to a solicitor in the neighbouring town and stay at home, than join the finest regiment in the world, and quit the man who had been to him father, mother, and brother all in one.

There had always been perfect harmony between these two; they had never had what people call words; no breath of dissension had ever marred their happiness. Nothing, indeed, had ever occurred to disturb their beautiful relations till one summer day when they met on the threshold of Mrs. Layard's house, each with flowers in his hand. Jack was two-and-thirty now, handsome and popular; and the Major, who was twice his age, was handsome and popular too—tall, erect, with eyes that were still keen, and a moustache that was thick if it was iron-grey. The Major's flowers had been tied by the gardener into a stiff bouquet; Jack's roses had been thrust æsthetically into a little basket. They were both evidently offerings, and as evidently offerings to be made to Mrs. Layard—a recent arrival in the village—or to her pretty daughter Kate. For the first time in his life Jack glared at his father, and for the first time in his life the Major frowned at his son. But they had no time to speak, for the servant came quickly to the door and ushered them both into the drawing-room.

Mrs. Layard's drawing-room was cool and pretty, and full of sweet scents, partly of Indian fans and cedar-wood boxes, and partly of mignonette and pinks; and Miss Kate, coming forward to receive the gentlemen in a white gown with a rosebud at her waist, was a cool and pretty and sweet object.

"How good of you to come! I am so sorry my mother is out," she said, with a smile for both. "Let me give you some tea."

Now, thought Jack, was his father's opportunity. Would he express regret at Mrs. Layard's absence, and say that he had brought her some flowers.

"I have brought you a few roses, Miss Layard," said the young man in blunt haste. "I don't know if you care for roses, but if you will accept——"

"Indeed, I love roses!" she interrupted him. "How good of you to have thought of me! And how pretty they look in that basket!"

Then it was the Major's turn.

"I am exceedingly sorry to miss Mrs. Layard," he said. ("So far, so good," thought Jack.) "I hope I shall have the pleasure of seeing her another day. But my call was really upon you, Miss Layard. I heard you say you were fond of picotees, and I have brought you two or three, if you will honour me by accepting them."

Kate was charmed. She thanked the Major in the prettiest way imaginable, and looked at the scented blossoms as if she loved them. Then she poured out the tea, chatting brightly.

It would have been impossible to say which gentleman Kate preferred, or if indeed she preferred either. She was used to society, and she was seven or eight-and-twenty, and she knew quite well how to entertain a father and son without showing her own hand. So she inserted the tiniest *soupçon* of deference into her manner towards the Major, and just the suggestion of pleasure-in-his-company into her way with Jack, and she satisfied neither, and filled both of them, for the first time, with ugly thoughts.

The Major took his leave first, and it would have been noticeable to any one who had known them long that his exit was unnatural. Usually when the father and son paid calls together, the former would arise and say, "Well, my boy, I think we must be going," and Jack would respond cheerily and jump up willingly. But to-day the Major said hesitatingly, "I don't know if you are coming, Jack;" and Jack, who had been listening vaguely to the chatter of Miss Kate's young brother, replied, "No, I'm just going to see this youngster's guinea-pigs, if Miss Layard will allow me."

So the Major went home alone, heavy-hearted, and that was a dismal evening at Uplands. Even the servant who waited at table marked the constrained conversation, and told the other domestics that "something was up." A great mountain of formality seemed suddenly to have sprung up between the two men. They talked certainly, but they talked as if they had been acquaintances. They were polite, and, being good-tempered men, they were not surly; but all the frankness and the fire had gone out of their intercourse. After thirty-two years of the closest affection, Love the Beautiful had stepped in and struck a discordant note.

After dinner, Jack murmured a few words about business, and with-

drew to his own sitting-room. It was not a very comfortable apartment because, as a matter of fact, Jack never used it. His father's so-called study had been the general living-room of the two ever since Uplands became their home, and there they had made themselves snug, and accumulated all their precious litter, and steeped the air with tobacco smoke, and been inordinately happy. But on this evening Jack felt that he must be alone, and he therefore stalked across the hall to the room which was called his, shut the door after him with a decided hand, and threw himself down in a leather arm-chair in no enviable mood. The Major did much the same in the room opposite. He too shut the door upon his sorrow, and sat down sadly to ponder the situation.

At eleven o'clock, when the house was quiet and all the servants in bed, Jack presented himself in the study.

"Father," he said.

"Yes, my boy," replied the Major, without looking round.

Somehow the Major looked older. He was seated low down in his easy-chair, and his spare form seemed shrunken; his voice even sounded thinner. Jack stood and looked at him pitifully.

"Father, which of us two is to go away?" he asked at last.

"We will settle that to-morrow, my boy," replied the Major.

Then he rose and drew himself up to his full height. If anything, he was taller than Jack, and he was very dignified.

"It is a misfortune, my boy," he said gently, "and, as you say, one of us must go away. We will settle which to-morrow. Now good-night, and God bless you!"

He bent forward and kissed Jack as if he had been still a little boy, and Jack returned the embrace.

"My dear, dear father!" he murmured.

"God bless you!" said the Major again.

Then the two men lighted their candles and went upstairs, parting at the Major's door with a close hand-clasp.

An hour later the Major softly opened his door and came downstairs, with a Gladstone bag in his hand. Entering his study, he wrote a short note, and, leaving it on the table, he cautiously opened the window and went out into the warm summer night.

Three hours afterwards, Jack also emerged noiselessly from his room and descended the stairs. He carried a small portmanteau, and in one hand he held a sealed envelope, which he deposited on the hall-table. Then he let himself out into the fragrant morning air and disappeared rapidly down the drive.

When the servants came down the next morning, they found the front-door unbolted and the study-window open, and a note on the study-table directed to Jack in the Major's writing, and a note on the hall-table directed to the Major in Jack's writing. And the bedrooms of both gentlemen were empty, and some of their clothes and other

necessaries were gone. The butler hurried off to the station, and there learnt that his old master had left Staunton by the mail-train at one A.M., and that his young master had departed by the four A.M. train, and that both had booked to London. In despair, the man telegraphed to the hotel where Major Wodehouse and his son generally slept in town, to their bankers, and to Jack's office. But no one could throw any light upon the extraordinary event. The gentlemen had not been seen or heard of. Only an undated note reached Jack's partner in the afternoon, in which Jack stated that he had been imperatively called away by private affairs and hoped that his sudden absence would not be inconvenient. The astonished servants stood aghast, and they were still more astonished when upon the following day, two letters were delivered at Uplands, one bearing a French postmark and addressed by the Major to his son, the other bearing a German postmark and addressed by Jack to his father.

It was evident that something had driven the two men apart, but that each believed the other to be at home, and Jack's partner took upon himself to desire the butler to go on as usual, saying that no doubt Major Wodehouse or Mr. John would soon return or communicate with their friends or servants.

But this hope proved fallacious. Every day or so letters came from the Major to Jack, and from Jack to the Major, always with a fresh post-mark as if they were travelling without halt, the Major's letters always from France, Jack's always from Germany. It was certain that each believed the other to be at home, and was eluding pursuit by constant movement, and by leaving no address at the temporary resting-places. Jack's partner wrote to both at various *postes restantes*, but got no answer, and presently he gave it up.

"It is a mere misunderstanding, not a quarrel," he told the butler. "Any one of these letters would give us the key to the mystery; but we have no right to open them, so long as we are assured by their regular arrival that both gentlemen are alive. Keep the place in order, and be sure one of them will turn up in time."

So a great pile of letters from France and Germany accumulated; and people talked a great deal about the disappearance of the Major and his son, and made many surmises, and suggested numbers of more or less plausible hypotheses; and the summer grew to its height and waned into autumn, and autumn frosts and falling leaves began to herald the approach of winter; and still nothing was heard of the absentees; and as Uplands was situated a little off the high road, out of sight became out of mind, and the affairs of the Wodehouses were canvassed less and less every day.

It was at this time, when the nuts were ripe and the Virginia creeper scarlet and the chrysanthemums in bloom, that Kate Layard began to look pale and languid, and to seem as if she were moped by life in the country, or as if, at all events, the air of Staunton did not suit her. Miss Kate's beauty did not diminish, but it assumed a very delicate

character, and her little hand grew smaller, and the colour in her cheeks came and went, like moonlight peeping through clouds. She coughed a little, and people wondered if there were consumption in the family, and what Mr. Layard had died of, and some even went so far as to commiserate Mrs. Layard on her daughter's failing health. But Mrs. Layard, whatever she guessed or knew, revealed no secrets.

"It was only the autumn weather," she declared. "Kate had been bred in London, and perhaps it was damp in the country during the fall of the leaf. She thought she would send her to Brighton for a week, or on a visit to some friends at Earl's Court."

But time went on, and Miss Kate went neither to Earl's Court nor Brighton. She looked fragile; but she was as discreet as her mother, and though she was unhappy and troubled, she always said that she was well, or at least that she only had a headache.

There came an afternoon in late October when the white mists hung low above the earth, when the red and yellow leaves lay rotting in heaps upon the ground, when only a robin's voice disturbed the melancholy silence, when all was still and damp, and the year seemed oppressed with the burden of its days. Kate had gone out, as she often did now—for the pensive evening suited her mood—after the afternoon tea, and almost mechanically her feet took her along the quiet road that led to Uplands. In summer, this road was a cool and bowery place, where the trees met overhead and the blue sky and the sunlight peeped merrily through here and there. But in autumn it was gloomy; the path was wet with recent rain, the gaunt bare trees no longer protected from the heat but shut out the fading day; it was already night in this grove, and Kate felt almost relieved when she reached a gate leading into an open meadow. She went and leant against it, and surveyed the scene. There was Uplands, with its gables and chimneys rising above the trees; the placid fields lay before her; a dog bayed in the distance; the moon, almost at the full, was just rising above the horizon. Everything was unspeakably peaceful except Kate's heart. She glanced towards Uplands and sighed deeply. She had never even owned to herself why she had been miserable since the fair June day, when the Major had come to her with his picotees, and Jack with his roses; but there are some things—facts of the heart mostly—that do not require open acknowledgment. Kate had kept some of the flowers that had been given to her on that day so long ago, and it seemed to her that their faint perfume followed her wherever she went. Perhaps it did, for she looked at the withered blossoms and fingered them every day.

She was still leaning against the gate when she became aware of a footstep that was coming towards her under the trees. She listened. It was a slow footstep, as of some one weary and out of heart, and as it drew nearer, she found that it was accompanied by a labouring breath, which came and went like a profound sigh. As the wayfarer came closer, she stepped out into the road to meet him. She was no

coward, and she thought that here was some one, ill at ease like herself, whom she might assist.

In the gloom of the trees she descried the figure of an old man, walking at a laggard's pace and carrying a bag. In a few moments he had reached the open space by the gate where Kate stood, which was now flooded with moonlight. It was the Major. He was a good deal aged, but Kate recognised him instantly, and with a little cry of joy she sprang to his side.

"Oh, Major Wodehouse, is it you?" she exclaimed.

"Kate! Miss Layard!" he said, trembling.

"Yes," cried she; "it is I—Kate Layard!"

"Kate *Layard!*" he repeated.

"Yes, Kate Layard. Oh, Major Wodehouse, don't you know me!" she cried. "What is the matter with you? You look so strange. What have you been doing? and where, oh where is your son?"

"Where is Jack?" faltered the Major.

He staggered, and Kate, with a strength that she did not know she possessed, stretched out her hands and supported him.

"Dear Major Wodehouse, you look so ill and so tired," she said soothingly. "I am so glad to see you! Let me take your arm and help you home."

"But you said, Where is Jack?" said the Major.

He seemed half dazed. He looked stupidly at her. In four months he had grown ten years older.

"Yes, dear Major Wodehouse," said Kate, trying to speak steadily through her tears. "He went away the same night that you did, and he has been travelling in Germany ever since. I believe there are hundreds of letters awaiting you from him. Oh, let us make haste and get to the house!"

"Jack went away the same night!" echoed the Major. "My boy, my boy," he murmured, "you might have trusted me! You said, 'Which of us must go?' and you might have known I should be the one."

"But why had either of you to go away?" asked Kate, with irrepressible curiosity.

The Major drew himself up till once more he was a fine man. In the moonlight he and Kate scanned each other.

"Kate!" he said solemnly, and with old-fashioned courtesy, "I am not ashamed to say that my boy and I both aspired to the hand of the same dear and sweet lady. When I found it out, I resolved to go away, hoping that you and he would marry and be happy, and I wrote and wrote begging him to try and win you. But at last, my dear"—the Major's voice faltered—"at last I could bear it no longer, for I have never been separated from my boy since he was born, and I hoped I might have the honour of calling you my daughter, and instead you tell me that my boy has fled."

Kate burst into a passion of weeping.

"Oh, Major Wodehouse," she sobbed, "I don't know what your son feels about me, but, whatever happens, let me be a daughter to you!"

Then the Major kissed her tenderly.

"My dear," he said, "whatever happens I will be a father to you."

And she took his arm and guided his wearied footsteps to his own door.

An hour later, Kate and the Major had read Jack's first note and most of his subsequent letters.

"My dear Father," the young man had written on the morning of his departure, "Kate Layard has come to be all the world to me, but I cannot forget that you have been all the world to me all my days before. So I am going. When I think you are married, I will wait in some place for news of you. Till then, I shall write, but push on, and leave no address.

"Believe me truly, dear Father,

"Your loving Son,

"J. W."

The succeeding letters were written in the same strain, and at last came several from Bonn impatient for replies.

The Major groaned.

"Why didn't he trust me?" said he, over and over again.

"But you will write now?" suggested Kate; "or telegraph?"

"I will telegraph," said the Major eagerly, opening the drawer where he kept telegraphic forms. "He will be at home the day after to-morrow, and you——"

"I," said Kate, blushing, "am going to Brighton to-morrow."

"What?" cried the Major.

But he could say no more, for hurrying footsteps were heard in the hall and a voice that cried, "Where is he? Where is my father?"

And the Major rushed out, and Kate sank half fainting into a chair.

I do not know exactly what Jack and the Major said to each other, nor would it be fair—even if I knew—to relate the precise terms in which Jack spoke his hopes to Kate nor how Kate made answer. But I will say that Kate walked home in the moonlight on Jack's arm, and that the Major looked after them without envy, and thought that, at past sixty, a daughter is better than a second wife.

The Major appeared the next day, spruce and tall as ever, and nobody but Kate knew how nearly sorrow and separation had made an old man of him. As for Jack, when he read his father's first note and successive letters, he felt more inclined to cry than he had done since he was a little lad and lost a favourite marble. "I love Miss

Layard," the Major had written, "but I love you even more, my boy, and I retire. Win her, Jack, and God be with you both."

"A father's love is beyond words," he said to Kate. "I ought not to have thwarted him."

"But you see, Jack, *I* loved you," returned Kate, conclusively.

So the bridal was celebrated, and Jack's partner, who was the only other person who knew why the Major and Jack had vanished, made a speech, in which he said words of such oracular significance that the bride blushed, and the bridegroom and his father exchanged glances of deep affection.

"In every incident of life," said this gentleman, "my partner Wodehouse and my friend the Major have acted similarly. Even in their love affair—if it becomes me to tread on ground so sacred—it has been with them a case of 'Like father, like son.'"

FAYR MADOC.

TWO LIVES.

A VIOLET opening from the bud,
All in a little world of green;
With fragrance sweet,
With beauty meet,
Under its leafy screen.

The sun was high and bright and fair,
But oh, the cloud that lay between!
A cloud that past
In mist at last,
And then the light was seen.

Sweet flower that rose to meet the sun,
Strong sun that gave it life: I ween
They had their hour,
Glad sun and flower,
When all the world was green.

GEORGE COTTERELL.

THE WEIRD STORY OF ADELA GROVE.

By E. Fairfax Byrrne.

All this which I am about to relate happened long before the great Theosophical "boom," and I am induced to revive the story (which at the time produced a good deal of sensation) because of the illustration which some of the facts give to theories now being promulgated, or examined, or derided, in accordance with the chance whether the immediate speaker be a follower of Madame Blavatsky, or a member of the Society for Psychical Research, or one of the common herd of every-day sceptics.

I should preface my narrative by the statement that the ten years over which the main events spread were a decade in the middle of the century. It all happened at a period when female dress was more frightful and useless than the present modern taste and sense can conceive; when young men of the rich middle class grew up deliberately into ornamental absurdities; when girls were unaware that their brains and muscles could stand hard work, and no one dreamed that journalism and lecturing were within a woman's province; and when the last thing men thought of was taking up philanthropy as an honourable career.

At the time my story begins, I myself, who am now getting into an old man, was somewhere in the twenties; and of all the people who excited my envy and admiration, Roger Atherstone stood out single, separate, and alone. It was not that I set him on a pedestal; he stood there naturally by virtue of qualities which none other of my acquaintances possessed. We were not friends—he, who was some years my senior, never so far condescended—but I was attracted by him, and was ready to be devoted to him; and he knew it, and therefore he sometimes spoke to me with a careless openness which he did not use to others.

In appearance he was a man of strong muscular build, but rather below the middle height; his shoulders were very broad and straight, and the carriage of his head handsome, strong and peculiarly proud. In colouring he was between fair and dark, with a remarkably massive brow, and a pair of quiet, deeply watchful eyes, whose colour and characteristics I am at a loss further to describe. His manner was changeable—sometimes reserved and secret, and sometimes open and expansive; but whatever he was, he was always one thing, and that was a man of impressive personality and telling presence. He was known to fame as a scientific man and an author of remarkable and original power.

It was on one Sunday evening that I recall receiving the first hint

of that strange story in which Atherstone himself was so deeply involved. He was visiting me in my rooms in the Temple, and I was speaking of my future career with just that sort of interest and enthusiasm that a commonplace man entering the commonplace career of a barrister may be expected to take in himself and his future. Atherstone listened in silence for a long time; but at last he spoke, with a turn of the head in my direction.

"And does all this suffice you?" said he.

The flow of my words stopped, and I found myself subdued and my enthusiasm quenched by the intense and deep gravity of his glance. At all times there was a noticeable magnetism in his eyes.

"Well, yes," I faltered; "I thought it would do very well for me."

"Ah!" he said, turning from me again and looking straight before him with a smile. "By the way, Ted, do you care very much about that pipe you are smoking?"

"The pipe? Not a jot! I protest I forgot that you hate tobacco."

"No," he said in his quiet way, smiling a little at the eagerness with which I knocked the ashes out into the fire; "I do not hate it. But I do not smoke on principle. And I find that even the fumes of tobacco from another man's pipe affect the clearness of my thoughts."

"Well, it's out now," said I, marvelling that so robust a being should prove so sensitive to a trifle.

"Thanks! But I interrupted you. You were talking of your career; you seemed content with it—even enthusiastic. Your own prospects appeared to suffice for your imagination. Now that is a frame of mind I find impossible. I never yet felt that my own physical powers were in the least adequate to fulfil the boundless aims of my will and imagination, or that my body matched the endowments of my mind."

"Why, I thought you were sound as a bell!"

"Oh, yes!" he returned; "I have flawless health. But that is not what I mean. The healthiest man is limited by time and space. My day and night in common with others consist only of twenty-four hours; and I cannot be in two places at once."

"I don't know," said I, "that I ever wanted to. When I don't like one place, I go away to another if I can. And as to time, I've got all there is."

"All there is!" cried Atherstone. "And you never want more? You never wish to double or treble your efficiency? Yet you are young and strong, and have tolerable faculties!"

"Nothing to compare with yours, Atherstone, I know," I replied shyly; "but they will serve my turn. I dare say I could do very well, though, with a little more facility."

"What if you got that, and became in addition brilliant—extraordinary?"

"Oh! I dare say it would be fine enough. But what is the use of talking?"

"It may seem to you odd," said he, turning upon me once more with that deeply grave glance, "but not yet having found that the use of one body sufficed for the demands of my brain and will, I covet possession of a second; or indeed," he added, "of a third, or it might be of many."

I looked at him with an incredulous smile.

"That seems rather audacious," said I.

And then my smile died away before the inexplicable gravity of his manner.

"Does it?" said he, with one of his rare flashes of emotion. "It seems to you strange that a man should desire willing servants to his best faculties? And you cannot conceive what it feels like to be cramped for want of a sufficient range of instruments to play on?"

"No," I said, foolishly enough.

He faced me with an energetic movement and looked intently and fixedly in my eyes. Then he approached me and bent over me as I leaned back in my arm-chair. I noticed the extraordinary massiveness of his forehead, idly traced the line of eyebrow, and then gazed deep into the intense unfathomable irises. I had no inclination to move or speak, but sat mute and entranced, it might be for a few seconds, it might have been for as many minutes.

"Ted, lend yourself to me, and let me use you to my own ends. You shall not lose by it."

Atherstone's voice sounded unaccountably remote and small. I was just considering this extraordinary proposition with a pleasurable and yielding sensation, when suddenly a step came on the stair outside, and a hand brushed the handle of the door. Atherstone withdrew, and I rose up in my chair. The step, after the momentary pause on my landing, passed on to a higher story. I sat rubbing my hair back confusedly.

"No," I said, "I'll be hanged if I will."

"What do you mean?" asked Atherstone, with a curious air.

He was standing now on the hearthrug in a nonchalant, indifferent attitude.

"Why," said I, "you asked me to—to lend you something."

"I swear I never spoke!" said Atherstone.

"You did!" said I angrily. "You asked me to lend you—what on earth was it? You couldn't have said my head! Am I growing idiotic?"

"I think not," returned Atherstone gently, with again that strange concentrated look in my direction. "But I tell you I have not spoken."

I did not contradict him again, being filled now with an inexplicable doubt about the matter, though the words remained clearly impressed on my mind. I sat up, passing my hand over my head, which felt

odd and confused. At the same time I found myself strangely hurt in my feelings and grieved with Atherstone, and also irritated in my temper. We were silent for some time, and when at last he spoke again, it was apparently to himself.

"After all," said he reflectively, "a woman would be best, if such an one could be found. Women are at once yielding and ambitious, trustful and daring. Yes, a woman would be best."

"I don't know what you mean, Atherstone," said I, my unaccountable irritation rising to the surface; "and I'm sure I don't know what you are talking about! But I've always been given to understand that women have rather peculiar and delicate natures, and I myself wouldn't go trampling into their affairs with my great hoofs for all the world could give me. But I don't know what you are talking about, nor what I myself am talking about either, for the matter of that!"

And again I rubbed my hair back confusedly.

* * * * * *

It was about six months after the above conversation that the next event took place in the order of this narrative. I was at an evening party in a fashionable West End house in London. The hostess was something of a lion-hunter. Atherstone, whose mark as a rising scientific man and philosophical author was already made, was one of those invited. It always struck me as an anomaly that Atherstone should attend evenings of this kind, seeing how precious time was to him, and how unfailing was his energy in filling it with work. Yet he often would accept the invitations that showered in upon him, and on such occasions rarely seemed bored. He would talk but little, but, withdrawing after a time from the other guests, would stand at some point of vantage and survey the faces of those present with his deep watchful eyes and never seem weary; and then one would find that he had silently taken his departure. That evening I saw him leaning against the wall, looking around him with his usual attentive air. I was about to approach him, when a woman's voice pronouncing my Christian name arrested me.

"Adela!" I exclaimed, taking the hand of a tall, good-looking girl in my own, with the warm pressure which our long acquaintance allowed. "How unexpected and how pleasant!"

"You did not know I was in London?" said she. "Well, it is nice to see a face as familiar as yours in a crowd of strangers."

We drew aside to talk together. Now I was not in love with Adela Grove, nor she with me; our families were of long acquaintance, and we took a friendly interest in each other, that was all. I was particularly interested for the moment, because I knew she was intending to earn her living as a governess; and an enterprise of that kind from a gentlewoman excited at once my admiration and my pity. Her father was a clergyman; they were not well off, and Adela had felt that she could serve the family interests in this way rather than another. A touch of daring and ambition in her nature helped her

to the resolve, and, indeed, I believe that the prose and stagnation of life in a country vicarage were distasteful to her eager and independent character. For the rest, I presume that Adela at the time was a commonplace young lady enough—that is, if any woman can be commonplace who is pre-eminently endowed with womanly characteristics—and Adela possessed a pair of soft brown eyes, a kindly and vivacious face, and one of the most eagerly affectionate and trustful hearts I ever met with. Her intellectual talent was not above the most ordinary; but, having had the advantage of three or four years in continental schools, she had acquired some knowledge of languages. At that time even so much would enable her to pose very well as a blue-stocking, though the sum of her learning would look poor enough in the eyes of a Newnham student of to-day. Of original gift or creative capacity Adela had not the very faintest indication. I ascertained that she had good hopes of a situation in London, was staying with her aunt in Kensington, and had by the merest good fortune received an invitation for to-night. What that single piece of "good fortune" was to cost her, neither she nor I could have dreamed.

Half an hour later I was standing in the crowded supper-room, and was placed in close juxtaposition with a pair behind me. They were seated, and were apparently in deep conversation. I was not so occupied, and presently I caught a phrase.

"And this ambition satisfies you?"

I started, for it was Atherstone's voice.

"No," returned a woman's soft vivacious tones; "I am capable of a great deal more ambition than that." And it was Adela who spoke.

"Ah! And you have talent?"

Adela ran over her little list of acquirements.

"That is enough for a governess," said Atherstone, with the faintest stress on the word.

"Yes," returned Adela, a little forlornly; "and that is all I aspire to be."

"If the chance were given you to aspire higher, would you take it?"

"Can you ask? But it is no use to aspire when one has nothing to aspire on. I have told you all I have in the way of learning, and you reply that it is just enough for a governess. How small a sum my learning seems when told over to one like you!"

Here there was a drop in Adela's voice, and throughout the whole speech I had detected, as it were a dimming of that contented vivacity which she had displayed when speaking to me. The next words came impulsively, in the untutored manner so natural to an inexperienced girl, and proportionately so dangerous.

"I never knew that I should ever in all my life talk to a man famous as you are!"

"Oh," said Atherstone with a kindly laugh, "I am not alarming! Now tell me. Do you think you could trust me?"

"THEY WERE SEATED, AND WERE APPARENTLY IN DEEP CONVERSATION."

There was a perceptible pause, as though from surprise, or some such emotion.

"Oh, why not?" came the clear girlish tones at last. "Of course I never saw you before; but, if you are good enough to ask for my trust, why not?"

"Why not, indeed, Miss Grove! And now, can you trust me enough to give me your address?"

A movement in the crowd gave me the opportunity of escaping with my companion from my involuntary eaves-dropping; and, as I left my position, I glanced back. There were the pair behind me—Adela, with flushed cheeks and shining eyes, looking really handsome, and Atherstone, with his head leaning on his hand, and stooping towards her with his intensest and most fixed gaze.

"Is he falling in love with her?" said I, as I walked away. "It sounds like it; and, if so, what a splendid thing for Adela!"

* * * * * *

A couple of years later I came across Adela again. She wrote to me from lodgings near the British Museum, and asked me to visit her. Of course I went at once. The little sitting-room was empty when I entered, and I had time to look round.

"I suppose she has a situation by the day," said I. "I hope they pay her well."

Then I took up one of the books that lay upon the table. To my amazement, instead of being a play of Schiller, or of Racine, or a primer upon any mild elementary subject, it was a treatise on biology. I put that down and took up another. It was Herbert Spencer's latest. The next was a translation of an ancient Sanscrit poem; and so on through all the newest science, and all the oldest, most recondite Eastern philosophy. I was standing gazing at the volumes almost stupefied—for Adela had never shown the slightest intellectual capacity in this direction—when she entered the room. I had not believed that any one could change so much. It was Adela, of course; but Adela with a new expression, a new bearing, and a new turn of phrase. Conceive one's amazement if some gentle commonplace creature, with a small stock of school-girl knowledge, suddenly accosted one in the manner of Bentham! Something of that sort I experienced when I saw and heard Adela again. Her carriage, once timid, gentle, vivacious, was transformed to brilliant self-assurance; her speech bristled with learned phrases and allusions, and she had the breathless hurried air of a woman whirled onward by multifarious pursuits of high import.

We had not talked together for more than a quarter of an hour before I placed my hand over my eyes to aid me in a momentary confusion of thought.

Why was the turn of phrase, which struck me so oddly from her lips, nevertheless so perplexingly familiar to my ears?

That fret tormented me while I listened in dumb amazement to

one who two years ago had not known the distinction between science and philosophy, or who again was as ignorant of parliamentary procedure as the mace itself, now discerning between Kant and Hegel, or talking with incisive scorn of this or that governmental measure.

"Adela!" I broke in suddenly, "all this is new from you! Where are your old books—your old interests? And how could you possibly have found time for—all this?"

I indicated the range of topics upon which she had touched by a circular movement of the arm, which somehow, at the same time, seemed to express the immensity of my own surprise.

"There are my old books," returned Adela, tilting her chin scornfully towards a small case in an obscure corner of the room.

"And you have a situation—a good one, I trust?"

Adela laughed and shook her head with the self-sufficient air so new in her. At the same time, she placed herself upon the hearth-rug and stood with her back to the fire. As she did so, she turned to me with a firm, grave air, as unexpected as the torrent of learning had been. This was no Adela's manner; yet it was singularly familiar. Who was it bringing to my mind?

"I have a situation in a sense," said she; "and one far beyond my expectations."

"I am glad of that," said I.

"It is not what you imagine," she returned. "I am not going to be a governess; that did not satisfy me."

"I see that some change has passed over you," said I slowly.

"A great change," said Adela.

And then she sat down opposite to me, and folded her hands upon her knees and looked silently into the fire.

I could not tell why it was that throughout this conversation I had taken no delight in her talk, as would have been natural in the talk of a clever woman, and had throughout felt dissatisfaction and even uneasiness. I missed the spontaneity and the charm of improvisation which one associates with true ability. Adela had never been a clever woman, and, because I knew it, I was not to be caught by the brilliance of this display; I was simply pained and puzzled. It was too varied to have been all learned by rote, and yet there was an unassimilated parrot-like something about it which jarred me. Just now, as she sat quiet with folded hands and her face turned to the fire, the old charm of her gentle affectionate womanhood returned and took me by the throat.

"Adela," I cried, with emotion, "you are so changed that I feel as though I had lost an old friend."

"I am changed," said she, "because so much more has been made of me than I could ever have hoped for. A great career is before me."

"A great career? Fudge!" said I impatiently.

"I am not angry that you say so," returned Adela, "for, of course, I never was anything of myself, and no one knows it better than you. Nevertheless, what I tell you is true—a great career is before me."

She gave me one of the brilliant looks which were so new in her.

"Well, tell me what it is," said I, a little wearily.

"You know Mr. Atherstone?" said she, in a low voice.

"Atherstone!" I cried.

And at the same moment it flashed through my mind that the manner and the phrases so new in her had struck me familiarly because they were not hers, but Atherstone's.

"It is he," said she, rising and walking about the room with an air of exaltation, "who has taken me in hand and changed me, who has lifted me up to be what I shall be. I have not the slightest fear of failing," she added impressively. "Does one fail who is inspired? Mr. Atherstone has created my mind. I had not one before; he has created it."

She paused, her brown eyes alight with strange emotion. I stared at her with amazement, almost with terror. The gentle affectionate looks which belonged to her, the soft vivacity, had all been banished in favour of this abnormal excitation.

"What do you mean, Adela?" I asked almost sternly.

"Mr. Atherstone," she repeated, "has given me my mind—his mind, if you like that better. He came to visit me, and by-and-bye he ascertained the truth about me—that I was just an ordinary woman with no particular mental gift, but with plenty of endurance, faultless health, and endless powers of work."

"Yes," I said, "and with a most devoted, trustful heart."

"Thank you," said Adela lightly. "Well, Mr. Atherstone had very strange ideas. He believed that it was possible for him to impart his own mind to another person, provided that person became a willing instrument in his hands and would allow him to do so. He could do this not by the ordinary methods of teaching and so on, but by a sort of short cut. It will be inexplicable to you, if you have not experienced it; but it is as true as it is marvellous and intoxicating."

She laid a stress on the last word, and threw herself upon an arm-chair, staring before her with a rapt look.

"Go on," said I sternly; "tell me how Mr. Atherstone proceeded."

"He came very often; we talked a great deal. Sometimes a strange state of confusion came over me, and I was unable to tell whether he spoke or whether I dreamed his words. One day he told me to sit down at a table with my back to him and then to write to his dictation. I did so. I waited, and, when I began to hear him speak, I wrote rapidly and fluently. After a time he bade me desist and bring him the paper. He read it through, and, when he had done, he said to me, 'You believe yourself to have written from my dictation?' 'Certainly,' I said. 'That is not the case,' said he;

'I have not uttered one word. I have simply precipitated the thoughts of my mind into yours.' At first I was frightened a little, Ted; it seemed so strange to be able to follow the thoughts of a man like Mr. Atherstone without his needing to speak to me. But when he asked me whether I would allow myself to be his instrument, so as to carry the great ideas he put into my mouth to other people in the world, I could only thank him for choosing so small a person as myself for so high a purpose."

"High purpose indeed! Was this what you were made for?" cried I indignantly.

"For nothing so great. Ah, Ted, for a little time I could hardly sleep or eat for joy and excitement! When I saw my face in the glass, I thought it could hardly be the face of that little girl who was called Adela. But I took courage. We began to practise at once. I submitted myself passively to his extraordinary power, and found my mind filled at his will with any thoughts he cared to put into it. Our method was this. At first he would be in the next room, and I would sit with paper and pencil before me. Then, when I felt the signal come, I began to write. I wrote as long as he chose to will that I should write. When it was done, I carefully preserved what was written and showed it to him. Then we tried the experiment at a distance—he at one end of London and I at the other. It was always successful; I never failed once. And then we tried the experiment from different towns, putting an ever greater number of miles between us. But it never failed; I was still able to write from his silent dictation whatever the distance between us. Then he was satisfied, and I was proud indeed. He told me I was the most perfect instrument he could have dreamed of possessing; that the communication between us was swifter and more perfect than between two persons communicating by means of the telegraph; that he had conquered time and space and doubled his own efficiency by breaking down the barrier between mind and mind."

"But you, Adela! What of you?" I broke in with a sort of agony.

She stared at me in amazement.

"I?" said she, as though her own personality were an unconsidered trifle. "What do you mean?"

"Your own mind? What of that?"

"I had scarcely any," she replied, simply; "now I have his."

"If you had no mind," I pursued, far too much in earnest to consider whether my words were complimentary or not, "at least you had your own nature."

"And to what higher use could I put it?" she said, indifferently.

She was far too *exaltée* for me to attempt to reason with her. I turned to more commonplace considerations.

"Your profession of teaching," said I; "that is destroyed?"

"Oh, yes," said she; "I have already lost what aptitude I had for teaching."

"You seem indifferent," said I; "yet you have to provide for yourself.'

"I do so," she replied, "by publishing the articles I write under Mr. Atherstone's dictation in the magazines and papers. But, Ted, there is something further!"

She clasped her hands, rising from her seat and looking up with a more strangely rapt air than before.

"What?" said I, gruffly.

"I sent for you," with an empty, absent smile, "because I wanted you to know beforehand, so that you should not be startled. And I wanted you to come. It will be in the papers to-morrow."

So saying, she handed me a printed placard. It was to the effect that Miss Adela Grove would make her *début* as a lecturer at St. James's Hall; Mr. Roger Atherstone would be in the chair, and she would be supported by half a dozen names well-known to literary or scientific fame. The subject of the lecture was some (to me) strange medley of biology and philosophy; in short, one of Atherstone's pet crazes.

I put down the placard with such a sense of confusion as I never had before. And the cause of it was not because it was absolutely unknown at that time for a woman to lecture in a public hall; though by no means as common as it is now, it was an event which not infrequently took place. No! My bewilderment was occasioned by this—it was no more the nature of Adela to undertake such a performance than it was mine (who could not discern between one tune and another) to undertake the lead in a popular concert.

"Of course I will come," said I, slowly.

Then, to hide my confusion, I began to read the placard once more from the beginning, intending after that to rise and say good-bye.

I was not, however, destined to end this extraordinary interview without a further experience. When I had finished reading the placard and had mechanically and slowly folded it up with minute attention to exactitude, as one does whose mind is preoccupied and confused, I turned round to offer my hand to Adela.

But I immediately perceived that a change had come over her.

She was standing rooted to the spot, her cheeks pale, her eyes fixed and dilated, and her whole body and attitude alert and tense, as one who is absorbed in the single sense of hearing. I was painfully reminded of the look of a dog, when his master calls from a distance, and he is unable for the moment to calculate from whence. It was apparent to me that the consciousness of my presence was blotted from her mind. I watched in silence.

After a few moments the colour returned to her face, but her eyes remained blindly fixed and with a sort of film over them. Then she began slowly to move, groping with her hands towards her desk. She took up her pen and sat down, still waiting, her head being always

turned in the same direction. Then she suddenly stooped over the paper, and began writing with feverish haste. That lasted for a quarter of an hour only. After this, she desisted as suddenly as she had begun, and sat perfectly still, the colour again fading from her face and seeming for the moment as though turned to stone. That lasted for some little time; then she rose and slowly felt her way back towards the hearth, and sank upon a chair, giving one or two deep sighs, or long breaths, indicative rather of intoxicated happiness than of any form of grief.

As for myself, she appeared totally oblivious of my presence.

When I saw signs of the abatement of this abnormal state, I ventured to utter her name as softly and calmly as I could. She started, stared at me with a bewildered air, and then rose with a smile.

"Why, Ted!" she exclaimed. "You here! How kind of you!"

I looked at her in mournful silence. She passed her hand over her eyes, and after a few seconds glanced at me again with an embarrassed laugh.

"Forgive me," said she, "for forgetting your presence. I recollect now. We were interrupted. Mr. Atherstone wished me to alter the peroration of my lecture, and of course that absorbed me."

She walked to her desk, gathered up the papers and handed them to me. I perused them. It was startling, original, effective; in short, it was superb. But it was as much Adela as I should have been myself had I, at that moment, seized Joachim's violin and fiddled in Joachim's best style.

I laid the papers down in silence, and as silently gathered up my hat and stick and the placard she had given me.

She did not appear to look for any praise, or for any remark upon what she had written, being far too much satisfied and too much assured for that. I shook her by the hand and made for the door. But then that something which had taken me by the throat before seized me again.

"Adela!" I cried. "Where are you? Nothing of your old self seems left. I have lost out of my life an old and valued friend!"

She waved her hand towards me absently.

* * * * * *

I went to the lecture at St. James's Hall, and saw, in Adela Grove addressing a large and enwrapt audience upon recondite points of philosophy, the impossible realized. She never faltered once; it was a marvel of fluent execution, and she won a storm of applause. Roger Atherstone sat by her side at the chairman's table with lowered eyes and imperturbable mien. It was only when the success of his extraordinary experiment was apparent that I detected a smile of triumph flashing momentarily in his eyes and hovering over his lips. He had calculated well when he said that a woman was the best for his purpose. And as a popularising medium for those original ideas

which possessed him like a passion, none could be better than Adela Grove.

The strange partnership thus begun, ran on with unprecedented success for many years. Atherstone's effectiveness was doubled, and his notions spread with rapidity. As for Adela, if "a great career" be comprehended in the fact that she passed through these years in unbroken success, she realized her dream. She wrote and lectured continually, sometimes going into the provinces to visit the provincial towns, and wherever she went she reproduced the thoughts of Atherstone with brilliant effect.

Whenever it was possible, I attended Adela's lectures. But where others applauded, I sat in persistent and ever deeper melancholy. Every year that passed seemed to obliterate more and more of Adela's real personality, until I found myself questioning at times her identity. My old friend was literally vanishing from off the face of the earth and was becoming a mere reflection of Atherstone. She acquired eventually the tones, the attitudes, the bearing, the very look of him, though there had been beforehand not the slightest resemblance between them.

Meanwhile, one thing at least was satisfactory; her physical vigour did not deteriorate; it increased. This was, oddly enough, not the case with Atherstone himself.

Towards the end of the ten years, I received one day a message from the latter begging me to call. I went at once. I had never altogether lost my old affection for him, though my displeasure at his extraordinary treatment of Adela had interrupted our intimacy. I found him in his rooms alone, and was at once struck by his worn and physically impoverished air.

"Are you ill, Atherstone?" said I, taking his hand.

"Not exactly," said he, with rather a weary air, "but just a little out of sorts. Have you seen Miss Grove lately?"

"I was at her lecture the night before last,' I replied.

"Was she well?"

"In splendid health as far as I could judge."

Atherstone breathed a sigh of relief.

"It would be hard indeed," said he, "if she failed just at this moment, and the work broke off. I have been taking it out of myself a little too much lately, and have got rather run down. And so I have been compelled to lay more work on Miss Grove's shoulders. I feared she might be unable to bear it."

"She seems unusually well."

"Thank Heaven! You see, the hours when I am forced by my physical condition to sit still and abstain from the effort of writing or speaking have increased lately. But it is only my body that suffers; my brain is more active than ever. Who could have conceived," he added irritably, "that I should be attacked by these strange, aguish seizures."

"You are wasting yourself, Atherstone," said I, "by trying to live two lives in one. You were, however, speaking of Miss Grove."

"Ah, yes! You see my brain runs the more riot that my body has to be still. And my calls upon her have been unusually frequent and heavy, in consequence. We have been in almost constant communication. Now, I should not like to spoil my instrument!"

"I repeat that Miss Grove is well."

But, as I said the words, I thought how effectively in my eyes he had ruined his "instrument" long ago.

Atherstone gave another sigh, and then he informed me that his physicians had ordered him a voyage to Australia, and that, as this coincided with a wish to pursue some particular biological studies, he was already making preparations for immediate departure.

Adela was to be left alone, then! Would the tie between them be broken by this separation? Should I live to see my old friend restored to me? Or would Atherstone's power continue to compel her even at this distance?

Pending the answer to these questions, I promised to do my best to look after Atherstone's costly human instrument during his absence. And this is how it came about that I was shortly afterwards promoted to the office of her chairman.

During the first weeks of Atherstone's absence, Adela seemed, contrary to my expectation, possessed by unusual powers of declamation and by unusual literary facility. After that—I calculated the time as being about a week after Atherstone landed in Melbourne—there came the first noticeable change. She was delivering a lecture of which I was chairman, and had gone on in her usual manner for about half an hour, when I remarked that she faltered. Then she stopped dead for some perceptible seconds; I was even obliged to touch her arm and enquire if she were ill. She shook her head and went on safely to the close.

Nothing occurred out of the ordinary for the next fortnight; her delivery and her success were as usual. Then came a day when she found herself unable to fulfil an engagement to write an article; afterwards a second occasion of faltering and recovering herself at a lecture.

Let me hurry to the direful close. There was a crowded audience in a big and fashionable hall; Adela was on the platform, and I was chairman. I noticed from the very beginning that she was not herself; her delivery was laboured, her manner uncertain.

The audience, as she went on, began to manifest signs of impatience.

Suddenly, to my dismay, she stopped dead, holding the manuscript rigidly before her. A silence so deep fell upon that vast assembly that the dropping of a pin might have been heard. I looked at her anxiously, and her eyes turned upon me. Once before in her life I had seen Adela look in that way. Once as little children playing together, something occurred which terrified her, and she had fled to

me, lifting to my face the same scared childish eyes which she turned upon me now. The reminder overcame me with the tenderest feeling and the sharpest fear.

"Adela!" I whispered, stretching out my hand.

She did not speak. The wild horrified eyes rolled back from me and wandered over the great hall without one sign of recognition. The audience sat spell-bound, save that a faint rustle of rising panic came from the back benches.

"Adela!" I whispered again.

And then I touched her. My hand was still upon her arm, which felt rigid under my clasp, when there broke from her lips an unearthly shriek. It was answered by sobs from women and loud exclamations from men.

"Adela!" I prayed.

She stood stock-still, her mad eyes roving from face to face, and searching in desperate forlorn pathos from roof to floor of the great building. Then she slightly swayed. I had her in my arms in a moment, and, regardless of the hundreds of ears and eyes that watched and listened, I cried aloud to her.

"Adela! For pity's sake! Don't you know me?"

Shall I ever forget what followed? My appeal, couched in the tones of agonising tenderness, was answered by an insane gibber of horrible meaningless laughter. The audience were stricken dumb for the moment by the ghastly sounds, and then the tumult of panic and horror began. Chairs and benches were overturned in confusion, women fainted, and the people rushed, some towards the platform, some fighting and struggling towards the doors.

I caught her up in my arms and carried her from the scene to a private room, a shuddering vestryman following on my heels. There was nothing we could do—nothing that for evermore could be done for Adela Grove upon this earth.

While I still bent over her, vainly searching for the return of reason to those ever-darkened eyes, a telegram was put into my hands. It had arrived at my chambers shortly after I left them for the lecture hall, and a messenger had conveyed it to me here. It was from Roger Atherstone, and was to this effect:—

"I am dying. Look after Adela."

Next day at eventide, a second telegram reached me. It was from the people with whom Atherstone had been staying ever since his arrival in Melbourne. It conveyed simply the brief information that Atherstone had died at such and such an hour. Upon enquiry and calculation, I found that the time of his passing away corresponded with the hour of that terrific scene of Adela's last lecture.

The light of his and her mind had been extinguished simultaneously, leaving her physical powers unabated, and thirty long years of insane existence before her. But the light that had gone out was of his mind only; her own had perished years before.

UNQUALIFIED ASSISTANCE.

By Gilbert H. Page.

I HAD failed again! When the lists were read out, and I learned I had been turned back for another twelve months, I could positively have sat down and cried, in spite of an incipient moustache and an habitually joyous disposition. For there was a malignancy about this sentence hard to bear, insomuch as at my last exam. I had been turned back for six months only, and it did seem impossible, even with the best will in the world, that after half-a-year's extra cram, I should be just twice as ignorant at the end as I was at the beginning.

I managed to preserve a stoical, even a cheerful demeanour, while within the precincts of the Hospital; but it was when I found myself alone on my way home that my spirits fell. Only he, who like me has frequently experienced it, can fully appreciate the gruesome task of informing his sorrowing or indignant relatives that he has failed again! It is a tragic comedy, that becomes particularly tragic on the third or fourth repetition.

On ordinary occasions I walked from St. Biddulph's to Victoria, and so home by train. Had I "passed" I should now have hansomed it to the station and caught the earliest express possible; but under present circumstances I set out to tramp it, a distance of some eight and a half miles. Anything to delay the evil moment, and shorten the inevitable evening at home. "Evenings at Home" was the name of a delectable little story-book with which my nursery days were entertained; now as I trudged through the miry streets of Westminster, and along the suburban roads of Clapham and Balham, my mind was busy drawing grim contrasts between nursery fiction and life's reality. I knew my "evening at home" would be the very reverse of entertaining.

If there had only been my mother to face I could have borne it. She still cherished the delusion that I was not strong, that I overworked, and that the examiners, jealous of my great abilities, purposely ploughed me; but there were my seven sisters, and sisters have a way of making intensely irritating remarks. And worse still, there was my aunt.

How often in the words of the poet, have I not bewailed the existence of that

> "One ungathered rose
> On my ancestral tree."

With what gratitude would I not have hailed the man who should

have dared to pluck it, thorns and all! There are eight such roses now; but in those days I naturally expected that at least some of my sisters would get married. But even in those days there is no denying that my Aunt Lætitia was a terror, that she ruled my mother with a rod of iron, that the girls trod meekly in her footsteps, and that she had lately awoke to the fact that I was five-and-twenty, and it was high time I should do something for myself.

And really when the painful ceremony of dinner was over, when we had returned to the drawing-room, when my aunt had opened fire, and my poor mother had turned on the water-works, I myself was ready to do anything anybody liked to suggest. Bullied, harried, wept at, railed at, I was bleeding inwardly from a thousand pin-pricks; a toad under a harrow could not have suffered more poignantly than I; and yet, forsooth, because I do not wear my heart upon my sleeve, because like the tortured Indian brave, I wrung my zygomatic muscles to a smile, my sister Letty reproached me with being unfeeling. Why, what does the other poet say about no captive being half so uncomfortable behind his prison bars as a soul behind a smile? Girls pretend to understand poetry; but they never seem to me to put it to any practical application.

"The long and short of it is, Arthur," said my Aunt, "that your mother can no longer afford to keep you at home idling round. She has spent as it is a great deal more upon your education than she can afford; and although my little income is quite at her service—I have indeed already made sacrifices, great sacrifices—I cannot in justice to the girls do anything further, since I see they will never be able to look to their *brother* for help. Nor can I advise, in fact I shall strongly oppose your poor deluded mother from fresh outlay. Think of the advantages you have had," and she proceeded to enumerate them in a rasping voice upon knuckly fingers.

"My dear aunt," said I, with the blitheness of the saint on the gridiron, "what do you want me to do? I am ready to do anything—sweep a crossing, join the shoe-black brigade, or perambulate Notting Hill in a Christy-minstrel shirt and a sandwich board; only," I added thoughtfully, "it does seem rather a waste of my medical education."

"Since there is no likelihood of your ever being able to keep yourself," said my Aunt tartly, "why not get somebody else to keep you instead? And since you can't get qualified, why not go as unqualified assistant to some country doctor?"

Thus it was I set about seeking a situation as doctor's young man, and through a certain agency I was put into communication with Cornelius Dugwell, M.D., of Standstilton, Puddleshire. Many letters passed between us, letters calculated to inspire confidence, not to say friendliness, on both sides. One of mine, I remember, concluded in the following touching strain. "And now, Sir, should you do me the honour of selecting me, I readily promise to devote my best energies

to your service, and to study in all things the promulgation of your interests."

I sent Dugwell my photograph; to such base uses do photographs come at last! mine had been taken to please quite other eyes. He did not send me his,—this is not customary,—but he offered me £30 per annum, paid monthly, and promised to lodge, board, light, and heat me into the bargain. He certainly succeeded in heating me, but this is anticipating! He hoped I should stay two years with him, but thoughtfully stipulated for a month's notice on either side.

When the agreement was concluded, the agency wrote to demand twenty-five per cent. on the whole year's salary; but supposing, I suggested, I do not stay the month? The agency replied that if I left through any other reason than my own desire, or the desire of my employer, the money should be returned. This sounded fair, and I paid up. It did not strike me until later, that there could be no other way of leaving, except indeed by my premature death, in which case the return of the percentage would lose its point; however, this is "par parenthèse."

My mother bade me a tremulous good-bye, and had electric bells immediately affixed to all the doors and windows. She lived in terror of burglars, and candidly expressed her fears. Aunt Lætitia and the girls showed a brave front, though as subsequent events proved were equally terrified but less candid.

I arrived at Standstilton one Monday in May, and with a great deal of trouble succeeded in unearthing the Doctor's house. Judging from the number of people I addressed myself to, who all professed profound ignorance on the subject, it did not appear to me that Dugwell possessed an extensive practice; but I afterwards explained it on the hypothesis that, naturally, of those persons whom he attended professionally, none survived to spread his fame.

When finally I did discover Dugwell's abode, I was not favourably impressed by it. It looked damp and delapidated. It had a long front garden that spoke eloquently of the amateur gardener; and I couldn't help observing to myself, that, however well the Doctor may have dug in former days, his present style of handling the spade left much to be desired.

The outer house-door stood open, and a powerful smell of hot soap-suds floated out upon the breeze. The inner door had a panel of ground glass, bordered with strips of orange and blue. In each corner-bit, was a clear glass star. From the other side of the door came the most inspiriting bursts of laughter. As no one answered my ring, I applied an eye to the left-hand lower star and looked through.

On the bottom stair but one I saw a very pretty person, with a pair of flushed cheeks, a lot of fair hair tumbling down her back, and a perfect swarm of children tumbling round her. It seemed to me there must be at least eight-and-twenty little arms and legs,

crossing, rotating, kicking, pulling, pushing. The young lady, however, looked perfectly happy; and she and the lively limb-owners were creating an extraordinary clutter.

The household Hebes being evidently too engrossed by the wash-tub to attend to me, I opened the door myself. A sudden lull fell on the children.

"Oh, it's the new young man!" cried one small limb-owner with, I trusted, a more perfect equipment of those useful members than he evinced of good manners.

"Don't be rude, Bretty!" cried the girl; "it's Mr. Goodchilde. Oh, I'm in such distress!" she said to me.

"So I perceive," I answered; "allow me to alleviate it;" and I proceeded to pluck a child off her here, and another there, and to set them upright upon the floor.

"It's not that," she said; "but I've lost one of them."

"What! are there any more?" I asked aghast, for the eight-and-twenty limbs had now resolved themselves into seven silent red-haired little boys and girls.

"There are two more in the nursery, and 'Corns' who is lost; but I daren't go out and look for him, because if I did, these children would quarrel like the Kilkenny cats, and when I came back I should find nothing left of them."

Her utterance was a little indistinct, for, with her mouth full of hair-pins, she was making a final effort to twist up her flaxen hair.

Here let me begin my career of usefulness, thought I, and earn Miss Dugwell's good opinion into the bargain. "If you will allow me to go out and look for 'Corns' I shall be most happy, only you must tell me in which direction to look."

"You had better take Bretty with you, and I'd advise you to go first to the market, and search the cattle-pens. After that, anywhere."

The girl seized hold of a stout boy of ten, patted his flaming hair into some sort of order, stuck a cap upon his head three sizes too large for him, and sent us off.

A dumb devil appeared to have laid hold of Bretty; he answered my friendly advances in a convulsed fashion, as though he were going to choke. I looked at him with anxiety, but the big hat-brim concealed most of his face. He proved, however, an excellent guide, for he led me straight to the heart of the market, where, the centre of a circle of admiring butchers, stood a scarlet-headed child, scientifically twisting round the tail of a calf. He wore a pinafore and no hat, and I knew intuitively he was "Corns."

"Hallo, Corns!" said I gaily. "You've got to come home."

He looked at me with solemnity. He was about six. "I don't know you," he remarked, and still held on to the tail.

"Of course you don't!" said I, "but I know you, you see. My name is Goodchilde, and your sister sent me to fetch you."

Bretty and Corns exchanged long glances; without a word they

exchanged thoughts also; simultaneously both exploded into laughter, and Bretty laughed so violently, I saw he had only restrained it by a mighty effort all the way along.

"Goodchilde!" cried Corns ecstatically; "what a funny name!" and Bretty said as soon as he could speak:

"She's not our sister, she's our governess; her name's Miss Merriman."

Meanwhile Corns clung to his victim, and no blandishments on my part would make him leave go, until I bethought me of bribing him with the wonderful things I had to show him at home.

"What things?" he asked suspiciously.

"Oh, photographs, and a pistol, and tennis-rackets," said I, thinking over the contents of my portmanteaux.

"Well, promise that I may help you unpack!" said Corns, and I rashly promised.

When we got back a gig stood at the garden-gate, and in it sat a little red-haired gentleman holding the reins. A little red-haired lady with an astonished expression of countenance, stood looking up at him from the pathway.

"That's pa," said Bretty.

"And there's ma," said Corns, which euphonious name I afterwards found to be an abbreviation of Cornelius.

"Ah, Mr. Goodchilde, glad to see you," said the Doctor; but he seemed a great deal too much hurried for gladness. "Where in the world is that man, Rowe? Told him to be here six sharp. Got plenty to do without wasting my time like this. Three black draughts to make up, one embrocation, one gargle. Mr. Goodchilde, I must really ask you to step round to the stables and see why he doesn't come. Bretty will show you the way."

Certainly my sphere of usefulness was being enlarged with a vengeance, but I meekly set off. When Rowe had been found and the gig delivered over to him, we proceeded indoors to a meal. I should not have known how to name this meal unaided, but Mrs. Dugwell informed me it was "high tea." I should have called the tea particularly weak, though, to be sure, the cheese made up for it, being as high as anyone could wish. Then there was part of a cold leg of mutton, hot potatoes boiled in their jackets, a loaf, a pound of salt butter, and some lettuces. The whole was set forth upon a table-cloth evidently left out of the wash-tub by mistake.

Miss Merriman appeared to enjoy it all very much. A perpetual ripple of laughter played over her charming face.

"Is anything the matter?" asked Mrs. Dugwell with a surprised air, and the Doctor shook his head. "It's easy to see you young people who laugh so much have nothing on your minds. Now I have to make up this evening alone—one embrocation, one gargle, three bl——"

Miss Merriman was vainly endeavouring to silence Juggey, a small

red-haired damsel on her left; but Juggey was obstinately bent on speaking to me.

"Miss Merriman loves you very much!" she told me across the table.

This was delightful news, though, from its publicity, slightly embarrassing. It caused Mrs. Dugwell's eyebrows to run up and lose themselves behind her red fringe.

"She must love you!" insisted the small Juggey, "for she always tells us she loves all good children!"

"Don't you think," observed Bretty, gracefully indicating his governess with the point of his knife—"don't you think she should have been christened 'Merrywoman'?"

"Don't you think you should have been christened goose?" retorted she, on which all the children shouted triumphant, "Oh, Miss Merriman! Don't you know geese are girls and boys are ganders?"

Mrs. Dugwell's eyebrows slowly descended. "It is a very bad habit," she said, "to make jokes on people's names."

"Pa does!" cried Bretty. "You know what he said about Mr. Metcalfe—that was the one who was here before you, Mr. Goodchilde——"

"Bretty, eat your meat!" interposed Miss Merriman.

"Well, he said——"

"Bretty!"

"He was the greatest calf he'd ever met. Didn't you, pa?"

"Three black draughts, one embrocation," muttered the Doctor. "I think, Mr. Goodchilde, if you are ready, you might assist me in the surgery," and I accordingly passed an instructive evening searching for the pestle and mortar, the drugs and the et-cæteras, which had all most unaccountably gone astray. There was no place for anything in that house, and nothing was kept there.

When finally I went up to my room, I found a large and agreeable party gathered together. Corns, in his nightshirt, sat on my bed; and his nurse, Miss Merriman, and a big bunch of brothers and sisters stood in a semi-circle, looking at him.

Miss Merriman was laughing of course. "Corns said you promised to let him help you unpack," she explained when she saw me, "and he won't go to bed until he has done it."

"Mr. Metcalfe let us help him unpack too," said Juggey's twin sister Sassie; "and he showed us the picture of the young lady he was going to marry. Are you going to be married too?"

"I mean to wait until you are old enough for me," said I, laying my dress suit down on the bed, carefully out of "Corns'" reach.

"Ah you'll never want them things!" said nurse lugubriously, "nobody ever does here. Many's the young gentleman I've known bring down his dress things and put 'em up again at the end of his time, never havin' worn 'em! And here's Miss Merriman with a couple o' lovely ball-dresses too, though I never heard of a ball in Standstilton, and I've lived here fourteen year."

"I shall have to cut mine up into dolls' clothes then!" said Miss Merriman imprudently, for the Dugwell children held fast to a promise of this sort with the tenacity of leeches. Meanwhile my portmanteaux were rifled, my pockets picked, my possessions scattered up and down the room; then when nothing more remained to be upset or unfolded, "Corns" consented to be carried off, merely remarking with a sigh, he wished now he had remained in the cattle-market after all.

Next morning when I entered the breakfast-parlour, I could scarcely see my way through the clouds of pink and blue gauze that floated in every direction. Miss Merriman sat in the window nursing a lap full of mutilated dolls, while Juggey and Sassie, armed, one with a pocket knife, the other with a pair of lamp scissors, were cutting their way through a ball-frock apiece.

"What an heroic sacrifice!" said I. "Are you really never going to dance again, Miss Merriman?"

"I have given up frivolity," said she, "and desire to embrace a career of usefulness——"

"Just my case!" I murmured.

"And so I came down here, though there was another reason too." She careered a hideous little wooden doll over her pretty pink palm in a fascinating manner. "My cousin Robert," said she, laughing and blushing, "wanted to marry me!"

"Robert's a sensible fellow!" said I, with conviction.

"Don't be silly!" Miss Merriman remarked. "Compliments are quite lost upon me."

The Doctor came to breakfast in his dressing-gown. He didn't seem at all refreshed by his night's rest, and was more hurried than ever. "There's a great deal to do, Mr. Goodchilde," said he—"a vaccination case, a case of croup, a housemaid's knee. Well, well! we must get through breakfast!"

Mrs. Dugwell appeared with the red fringe all divided and rolled up upon little steel curling-bars. She had apparently forgotten who I was, and looked astonished to see me there.

We took our seats, and the Doctor, who faced the window, sprang up again from his as though stung. "Hold me down!" he cried, "restrain me! Mr. Goodchilde, I authorise you to use physical force. If that scoundrel goes into Mrs. Fawcett's, I shall do him a mischief!"

Mrs. Fawcett was the old lady who lived opposite, and "that scoundrel" the rival practitioner, who was at that moment riding past our gate. Dugwell, I learned later, nourished such an enmity, as can only be understood by the father of ten children, towards this young and well-dressed bachelor rival. Thistle used frequently to ride by as we sat at our meals, and always occasioned some terrific family explosion.

I spent the first part of the morning dispensing medicines. In the

afternoon I went with Dugwell in the gig to visit various patients; that is to say, he visited them, and I held the reins outside. He left me on each occasion with many cautions to be careful with the cob—not to use the whip, not to saw with the ribbands, not to go too far away, not to stand too long in one place. You might suppose I had Ayrshire in the shafts instead of a wretched old Rosinante, for whom a Jew could not have extracted five pounds at a country fair.

While I waited at the vaccination house I saw coming along the road a bevy of children, with a tall and pretty figure in their midst. Recognising Miss Merriman and the little Dugwells, I urged my Rosinante to their encounter.

"I am taking the children for a walk," said Miss Merriman, "and it's so amusing!"—she always found everything so amusing—"for at home I wasn't supposed to have sufficient discretion to go out by myself."

"I wish I were one of the children!" said I. "It is not at all amusing holding in this fiery brute."

Miss Merriman suggested I should get down and walk with them a little way. She thought from his looks the fiery brute would stand still.

I accordingly tied the reins to the back-rail, and Rosinante hung his Roman nose, and stretching out one forlorn foreleg, rested on it, a picture of equine despair. Miss Merriman and I walked slowly down the lane. The children gambolled about us. They were playing "catch who can," and found we made a convenient obstacle round which to dodge. Meanwhile I audaciously questioned my companion about Robert. What was his profession? What was he like? How did he support life now that she was in Puddleshire?

"Robert," said she, "is five-and-thirty"—here I had the advantage, being ten years younger—"and he wears a black moustache with long waxed ends"—my heart died within me, I having only a soft growth upon my upper lip—"just as though he was a barber"—my heart took a new lease of life—"and he contradicts everything you say"—I grew positively blithe, for I always agree with everything on principle, it saves so much argument. "For instance," Miss Merriman concluded, "if you were to say black was white, he would tell you it wasn't, just to be aggravating, you know."

Another man might have hinted, that, in this particular instance, a regard for truth may have actuated Robert, but I wisely held my peace.

"And after all he only wants to marry me to save the money," said she; "for my godmother left me eight thousand pounds, provided I marry before I am twenty-one; and nothing at all if I don't. I shall be twenty-one in three months from to-day."

"And who gets the money in the latter case?" I enquired.

"An asylum for spinster idiots," said Miss Merriman ruthfully,

"where I'm sure my godmother must have been staying when she made so absurd a will."

Looking up the road, I saw Dugwell at the door of the vaccination patient, gesticulating like a madman. I took a hasty farewell of Miss Merriman, jumped into the gig, and found the Doctor in a violent hurry to get on to his next patient. I said to myself, that, but for Miss Merriman, it would be simply impossible for me to live long with Dugwell; there was a want of repose about that man essentially antagonistic to my nature.

When I got home I found a letter from my mother, in which she incidentally informed me burglars had broken into a house in the next parish, and that Aunt Lætitia was at that moment in the coal-cellar, practising the use of a policeman's rattle.

There was no dignity about life at Dugwell's, and I was forcibly reminded of this when I was asked to go down the garden and cut lettuces for supper. I stepped into the kitchen, where I found Miss Merriman making pastry, whilst four little Dugwells sat in a row on the dresser looking on.

"Take half a glass of water," said she; "squeeze into it the juice of a lemon—Sassie, hand it me over—add the yolks of two eggs—are they beaten yet, Juggey?—and mix with your flour into a stiff paste. I'm giving the children cookery lessons, Mr. Goodchilde, and making a pie for dinner at the same time."

"What a capital wife you'd be for some poor man!" said I admiringly; "I can see that is going to be a first-rate crust."

"He musn't be too poor," she remarked, "or else he couldn't give me the butter and eggs my crust requires."

"Now if you were to marry Robert, the eight thousand might just suffice."

"And as it is, the Spinsters will have it to make ducks and drakes of!"

"Goodchilde! Goodchilde!" cried a voice from the surgery, "where are you? I want the poker heated to cauterise a dog-bite."

Miss Merriman's puff-paste proved excellent, but Mrs. Dugwell's eyebrows completely vanished when the young lady gayly enumerated all she had put in it. "Two pounds of fresh butter! two eggs!! the juice of a lemon!!! My dear Miss Merriman, you must intend to marry a millionaire." The eyebrows never appeared again the whole evening.

Miss Merriman had capital theories on the subject of education; for instance, she said the infant mind required variety; and accordingly she never seemed to pursue the same course of study for two days together; never for two hours were she and her pupils to be found in the same place. As the weather grew warm, she held her classes in the garden; and I, at about the same period, found the open air much more conducive to brain work than the surgery. Across the middle of the garden was a grassy bank, crowned with some scrubby shrubs.

Behind this, the Doctor grew his vegetables, or rather planted them, for the greater number firmly refused to grow. Miss Merriman of an afternoon would sit upon this bank, with her pupils grouped around her, and thitherwards my footsteps would also stray. The doctrine she taught was not always abstruse.

"This is the church," said she one day, folding her pretty hands together, with the fingers pointing downwards; "and this is the steeple"—up went two of the tiniest little fore-fingers in the world—"open the doors, and there are the people!"—she rapidly twisted her thumbs outwards, and turned her hands upside down—"here is the parson climbing upstairs,"—a movement too complicated for verbal description—"now he's in the pulpit, saying his prayers!"

If ever I felt a frantic desire to kiss a parson, it was at that moment when Madge's rosy thumb was wagging at me over the fork of her other hand. She allowed me to address her as Madge now, and she was good enough to call me Arthur. The children were delighted with the game and fell to practising it assiduously.

"I wish you would teach me too how to do it," said I; and she tried in vain.

"I'm afraid you'll never be a doctor, Arthur, you are so clumsy with your fingers."

"I'm afraid so too! And I'd throw it up and brave my Aunt Lætitia's rage, but for you. So long as you stay here, I shall."

"I never could have the heart to go," said Madge, "for I feel I am such a comfort to Mrs. Dugwell. You know we're very distantly connected, and I really came down more in pity than anything else. Did you ever see such a household? I soon gave up trying to reform it. Only this morning I altered for her the drapery of her Sunday gown. Just fancy! her wretch of a dressmaker had pleated it on bias instead of selvage!"

"Is that possible?" said I, looking far more concerned than I was able to feel, the mysteries of female drapery being far beyond me. "But do you know," I added, "that's just my case with Dugwell. I should feel horribly mean leaving him in the lurch, just now that he's got to lean on me, and if I haven't reduced the surgery to order, at least I've made it no worse than I found it."

"Still," said Madge, "I think with regret of the eight thousand pounds."

"Yes, it does seem a pity," said I meditatively.

"You see, if only there had been any one else but Bob——"

"There are a good many fellows in London too," I observed.

"But not one I cared about!"

"There are even a few down here. Thistle, for instance?"

"Am I a donkey that I should do this thing?" said Madge, perpetrating a joke à la Bretty. "Who are the others?"

I became thoughtful. "Well, to tell you the truth, I don't at the present moment see any one else."

"No, of course you can't!" said Madge, meditative likewise.

"Only, supposing you know there was some one else, a fellow who liked you very much, and all that, you know," said I, rather lamely, "he might not like to make up to a girl with eight thousand pounds, because it might have a mean sort of look, you know?"

"But the point is," said Madge, laughing and blushing, "that in a very short time I shall be a girl without eight thousand pounds unless —unless——"

What was it gave me the happy inspiration of taking her down the garden to look at the recalcitrant cabbages? The children, blessed children! were too absorbed in getting the parson to stumble, climb, and tear upstairs, to pay us any attention. When we emerged again into common life, everything was arranged between us.

"And I shall insist on your passing your next exam., Arthur!" said Madge, "even if I have to coach you myself."

"You have certainly embraced a career of usefulness at last!" I told her; and she, perhaps remembering certain interludes among the vegetables, coloured all over her dimpling face.

"That reminds me," said she, "we have got to break the news to poor Mrs. Dugwell and the Doctor. Arthur, I cannot do it."

"Let them enjoy one more good night's rest, anyhow," said I magnanimously; "we needn't think about it till to-morrow."

But the morning brought me a letter from home which precipitated matters. My Aunt Lætitia wrote to me herself, and in singularly shaky penmanship. She informed me that, in spite of electric bells, the rattle, and my old top hat ostentatiously displayed in the hall, the house had actually been broken into, and it was evidently through a special providence only that my mother and all of them had not been murdered in their beds. As it was, the miscreant, no doubt disturbed at his nefarious task, had but time to carry off cook's umbrella and galoshes, with part of a ham from the larder. The discovery, however, of his nocturnal visit had thrown my mother into a nervous fever, and the girls absolutely refused to go to bed, but spent the succeeding night trembling and quaking in the drawing-room. My aunt concluded by imploring me to come home immediately, and promising that everything should be forgiven.

This struck me as slightly "previous," for though I had certainly a great deal to forgive my Aunt Lætitia, I intended making terms before doing so.

However, as I said to Madge, my mother's comfort was the first consideration, and I must therefore tell Dugwell at once I could not remain beyond the month. And as it was quite impossible to leave her there behind me, she must be brave and speak to Mrs. Dugwell at the same time.

The Doctor heard my news with a stoicism of which I should not have considered him capable. He even went so far as to say, "It appears to me, Goodchilde, that you have mistaken your vocation.

The profession of medicine is an arduous one, laying claim to every moment of our day and night. I should advise you to adopt some career allowing more scope for meditative leisure."

By which of course he meant me to understand, that unless a man lost as he did, the first hour of every day, and spent the rest of his time hurriedly searching for it, he did nothing at all!

Mrs. Dugwell likewise, from Madge's account, concealed her chagrin admirably well. Madge acted the little scene for me in spirited fashion. "It has always been a matter of surprise to me, my dear" (here Madge managed a total eclipse of the eyebrows), "that you should have devoted your talents to the education of children. You appear to have no adequate appreciation of the difficulties of the task. Infancy is not the time for laughter and amusement, but for a sober training of the young idea in the direction it ought to shoot, and I regret to say this morning I found Corns playing a very profane game with his fingers, in which he assured me his thumb represented the clergyman!"

But for all that the ten little Dugwell children adored Madge Merriman; and so at the present day do a small Madge and Arthur of our own.

LONDON CITY.

YES; give to me the busy scene—
The striving, struggling, toiling town,
And you may dream your hours away
On any pleasant "sheep-trimmed" down!

You find a marvel in my words
Who deem a country life so fair;
Yet, after all, 'tis not so strange
That each should love his native air.

For you were born near pleasant meads,
With yon soft river murmuring nigh,
And 'twas the famous Bells of Bow
That made my cradle-lullaby!

It was the City's very self
That first I saw with childish eyes—
The centre of the tide of life
Which throbs through all her arteries.

An ebbless tide—I watched it flow
Through busy street and crowded mart,
And felt with keen enchanted awe
The pulses of the City's heart.

The very stones to me are dear,
That pave her busy courts and ways,
Her past is mine, and interlinked
With memories of heroic days.

For Nature's life is always young,
No wrinkles mark her turning page;
And each sweet Spring is born as new
As any Spring of bygone age.

But History writes itself in stones,
And gravens with an iron pen
In every city's rise and wane,
The record of the life of men.

I tire of your fertile fields,
Your waving woods with silence rife,
And find more music in the stir,
The clamour, and the din of life.

You love your gardens, orchards gay,
Your wealth of roses white and red—
But leave to me the smoke-dimmed streets,
The thousands toiling for their bread.

Your gentle river glances on
Inconsequent through sun and shade,
But my old Thames bears half the weight
Of a great Nation's mighty trade.

So you, amid the natural world,
The hand of God most surely find;
Whilst I—I love humanity,
And feel Him nearest 'mid my kind.

You catch, perchance, from this fair earth,
Some glimpse of our lost Eden's bowers;
All heaven looks down from yon blue sky,
And smiles up from the opening flowers.

I see above the surging crowds
Two arms upon the Cross spread wide—
The scattered flock upon the hills
For whom the Lord of Glory died.

Each to his own—for you the peace
That broods about your fathers' halls—
For me the busy life that plies
Beneath the shadow of St. Paul's!

CHRISTIAN BURKE.

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The Argosy

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